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Strike to Save Agricultural Land in Galilee

1345 Olive Trees Destroyed In Area 9

The local councils of Sakhnin, Arrabeh and Deir Hanna, in the central Galilee, decided to strike on Thursday, January 31 to express local opposition to the Israeli authorities' attempts to seize 800 dunums of agricultural land in an area known as al-Mill (Area 9). During the past month, local residents reported three incidents of sabotage by Israeli troops against their land, in which a total of more than 1345 olive trees were destroyed. An attempt to confiscate land in the same Area 9 in 1976 led to a confrontation between Galilee and Triangle residents and the Israeli border guards and police which left six Palestinians dead. The struggle is annually commemorated on a national level as Land Day.

The latest attack against Arab-owned land occurred on January 28, when a patrol from the Israeli nature reserve authority drove onto the fields of Yousef Saleh Khouri, the village priest, and destroyed more than 140 olive trees. The sabotage took place as the village council was holding a joint session with Arrabeh and Deir Hanna local councils, all located within al-Batouf region, to coordinate a joint response to a sabotage incident three days earlier. Village residents who were working their fields took the licence plates off the vehicle and gave them to police.

In the January 25 incident, two Israeli military vehicles entered the orchards at night, smashing more than 1000 small trees belonging to Sakhnin residents and 100 more belonging to Arrabeh residents. Sakhnin municipal council estimated the losses to be about I85 million.

Arab residents in the Batouf region say that no confiscation order had been issued against the land. Sakhnin local council head Mohammed Ghanayem told *Al Fajr* that contrary to Israeli police claims, he possesses a letter dated 1984 signed by then Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens saying that the land was not subject to military closure. Despite this, Ghanayem received a warning from Israeli police commander of the Western Galilee region Moshe Sadeh January 27 against entering his land. The council head said that the warning was conveyed to him by telephone, minutes before he held a press conference on the sabotage cases. Ghanayem ignored the warning and joined several Arab Knesset members and the council heads of Arrabeh, Deir Hanna and Kufr Yassif on a visit to the land.

Ghanayem directly blamed the Israeli authorities for the destruction of the olive orchards. In his press conference, held at the Sakhnin local council January 27 he explained to reporters that the sabotage was aimed at pushing Arab landowners to despair and to yield to confiscation plans. Ghanayem also warned that Sakhnin residents will not sit back and allow their land to be taken away from them.

Knesset Members Tawfiq Toubi, from the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE), and Mohammed Mi'ari, from the Progressive List for Peace (PLP), condemned the sabotage incidents and called for them to be confronted with full force. Toubi called for a united stand to confront Israeli government measures.

The measure was also condemned by Mohammed Abu Raiya from the *Anba' al-Balad* movement.

Ghanayem informed reporters that since last year there were repeated attempts to establish *de facto* control over the land. In one incident, January 9, an Israeli military jeep drove over the land and destroyed more than 105 trees. The local council protested the incident and was pursuing the case with the police and neighbouring settlements when the second attack occurred on January 25. He also pointed out that Israeli army units entered the land last February, claiming that it was a military area. At that time 23 olive trees were destroyed. Village residents were able to collect I830,000 in compensation after they pursued the case legally.

The Israeli Knesset January 30 dropped from its agenda a suggestion by Democratic Front member Tawfiq Toubi to discuss the question of attacks on Palestinian land. In his justification of the attacks, Israeli Deputy Agriculture Minister Abraham Oz admitted to the Knesset that the army and the Green Patrollers had destroyed the olive trees. Oz said that the area in question is a military area and that it is "natural" that army equipment would destroy the trees. Oz said that farmers were at fault for planting trees knowing that the area is a military zone.

MK Toubi objected vehemently, explaining that former Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens had declared that the area was not a military zone. Toubi demanded that farmers be compensated I8500 million. Oz rejected the demand, saying that farmers whose trees were destroyed "outside the military zone will be compensated."

A Sakhnin resident demonstrates where Israeli troops uprooted trees on his land.

East Jerusalem Closes Down to Protest Arnona Bills

Palestinian merchants in East Jerusalem carried out a promised general strike January 31 to protest this year's exceptionally high municipal tax (*Arnona*) and the lack of response from the Teddy Kollek West Jerusalem municipality to earlier complaints.

An *ad hoc* committee of merchants which is leading the protest against the municipality issued a statement January 30 condemning the municipality's "indifferent attitude." "Seventeen days have passed since more than 6500 merchants and residents of al-Tur returned their tax books under the slogan 'Taxes Equal Services,' and there is no serious concern shown by officials of the municipality." The committee's statement said that Palestinian merchants are forced to escalate their protest. "If merchants' demands receive no response, the merchants plan to further escalate their protests," the statement added.

Amir Hashin, Teddy Kollek's advisor in Arab affairs who refused to accept the returned *Arnona* tax books, is to meet with officials of the Arab Chamber of Commerce on the strike day and discuss the demands of merchants. A source in the Chamber of Commerce told *Al Fajr* that the commerce members demand a delay in payment of one month, a change in the classification of streets and quarters in East Jerusalem and a tax exemption for closed shops and unused areas in shops. Tax bills for residences and businesses are calculated by an Israeli value assessment of location and square-metre space.

A sample of the *Arnona* bill: kids might love the pictures but parents will go bankrupt.

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Israeli occupation troops evacuating one of their military camps in south Lebanon.

Israeli Troops and Lebanese Surrogates Under Attack

A South Lebanese Army commander was assassinated, a Sidon collaborator killed and at least seven Israeli occupation soldiers wounded in a number of military attacks against Israeli troops and their SLA surrogates last week. Military operations against Israeli troops, according to Lebanese and foreign reporters, were at a peak this week with 25 attacks reported. Farther north, Israeli troops completed evacuating equipment from the Sidon area in the first stage of the Israeli withdrawal plan.

The most serious incidents of the week occurred on January 28, when five Israeli soldiers were wounded in two separate attacks. Three Israeli soldiers were wounded in an operation near Khardaleh Bridge, on the Awali River, near the village of Marjayoun. An Israeli military spokesperson reported that an Israeli military vehicle hit a landmine. Two soldiers were seriously wounded and another was lightly wounded. All were flown by helicopter to Haifa's Rambam Hospital.

Later in the day, two more Israeli soldiers were wounded when an explosives charge went off under their vehicle as it drove on a road near al-Qasimiyeh Bridge on the Zahrani River. Israeli troops closed off the attack area and thoroughly searched for the attackers. There were no reports of arrests.

The Jerusalem Post also reported January 29 that three other attacks against Israeli and SLA troops were staged the previous day, but no one was injured. These included: an explosives charge that went off near an Israeli military patrol in Burj al-Shamali refugee camp, near Tyre; a charge that went off near the village of Deir Qanoun, in the western sector; and a Katyusha rocket that was fired at an Israeli military outpost in the eastern sector.

The Mercedes car of Antoine Lahad, commander of the SLA, was bombed in the Marjayoun area January 29. Lebanese government radio reported that the sound of the explosion rocked the area. It was not known, however, whether or not Lahad was in the car when the explosion went off. An unidentified caller later telephoned a news agency in Beirut and reported that the Lebanese resistance movement was responsible for the attack. This was the third assassination attempt against Lahad in the last year, Lebanese reports said.

Several days earlier, on January 24, two other Israeli soldiers were wounded when an explosives charge went off under an Israeli military vehicle on a road near the village of Deir al-Zahrani. The two soldiers were transferred to Rambam Hospital by helicopter. On the same day, an SLA officer was killed when his booby-trapped car exploded in his home village of Hula, four kilometres north of the Israeli border.

Also on January 24, Israeli newspapers reported that the Israeli liaison office building in Nabatiyeh came under RPG attack but that there were no casualties. Meanwhile, an SLA outpost in the village of Deir Qanoun was attacked with Katyusha rockets. Another SLA outpost in Nabatiyeh came under RPG fire.

On January 28 unidentified commandos shot and killed a local resident of Sidon for collaborating with Israeli troops. More than seven local residents of Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp near Sidon have been assassinated by a group calling itself "The People's Tribunal" for collaborating with Israeli troops.

Among other incidents during the past week, Israeli military spokespersons reported that 10 people, described as "armed infiltrators," were shot and killed as they tried to cross Israeli occupation lines in south Lebanon. Describing one of the incidents, *The Jerusalem Post* said January 25 that Israeli forces spotted a commando squad as it tried to cross Israeli military lines near the village of Jezzine before dawn and opened fire on them. "When the sun rose, the area was searched and the six bodies were found," the *Post* ambiguously wrote.

Four more commandos, according to Israeli military sources, were also killed near Jezzine January 29.

Israeli Troops Readied For Pull-Out

Reports from the Sidon area said that Israeli troops have moved out all military equipment from the area south to the Litani River. Israeli military sources said the equipment pull-out was ten days ahead of schedule, but no military personnel have yet been moved. Israeli reports also said that Israeli troops used explosives to destroy bunkers and positions along the Awali River which could not be dismantled otherwise. Israeli soldiers are now living in tents or empty buildings, awaiting redeployment south.

The three-staged withdrawal from Lebanon is scheduled to be implemented over a period of nine months. The military estimates the withdrawal will cost US$60 million.

Another attempt to revive stalled Naqoura talks this week failed after Israeli negotiators refused to provide a timetable for their total withdrawal.

Jordan Arrests 4 Suspects in Qawasmeh Slaying

The suspected assassins of Hebron's exiled mayor and PLO Executive Committee member Fahd Qawasmeh are under arrest, according to the prestigious Kuwaiti daily *Al Qabas*.

In a four-column front-page report January 15, *Al Qabas* reported that the men suspected of shooting Qawasmeh in front of his Amman residence were draftees in the Jordanian army. Two employees in the PLO's occupied homeland department were also arrested for suspected connection in the case.

According to the widely-circulated Kuwaiti newspaper, Jordanian military intelligence made the arrest after the two draftees failed to show up at their posts immediately following Qawasmeh's assassination.

The Jerusalem daily *Al Mithaq* reprinted the article from *Al Qabas* but did not publish the names of the alleged killers.

Israeli daily *Al Hamishmar* reported January 30 that the Qawasmeh clan in Hebron is aware of the identity of the killers and are demanding that their names be publicly released. *Al Hamishmar* also reported that deported Hathouj Mayor Mohammed Milhem "does not suspect Syrian involvement in the assassination."

Shamout Daughters Permitted Visit to Exiled Parents

Three teenaged daughters of two ex-prisoners living in exile were given a joint Israeli passport January 25 after fighting for more than one year for their right to travel. As soon as they received their passport the Shamout children — Dawlat, 18 years old, Hala, 17, and Nadia, 15 — left Israel via Rafah, under the auspices of the International Red Cross, to visit their parents, Mahmoud and Zakieh Shamout, who are currently livng in Cairo. Mahmoud and Zakieh spent 15 years in Israeli prisons on life sentences before being released in November 1983 in a POW exchange agreement between the PLO and Israel. The Shamouts were forced to leave behind their five children, including two sons, Masoud, 18, and Amer, 16, with their grandparents in Swailem village in the Nazareth district.

Israeli officials in the Interior Ministry had offered the daughters only a one-way visa, which would allow them to see their parents, on condition they never return home. In April 1984, the three daughters paid fees for a passport but their application was denied one month later and they were "offered" permanent emigration.

In response, the family's lawyer, Walid Fahoum, sent a letter to the Social Affairs department in Nazareth demanding their intervention in this case. The letter explained that the three daughters did not wish to remain abroad permanently since they had spent all their lives in the country. Social Affairs referred the matter back to the Interior Ministry. More detailed information and a flurry of memos were sent to the Interior Ministry department in Jerusalem and the response was always negative.

Fahoum told *Al Fajr*, "I explained repeatedly to them that the destination of the Shamout daughters is Egypt and Algiers and that they are concerned about keeping their own Israeli citizenship. However, they offered them only temporary travelling papers, "*Laissez Passer*." Fahoum threatened to go to High Court if his clients did not receive their passports. On November 25 Israeli officials agreed out of court to offer the three daughters a single passport valid for six months. Fahoum told *Al Fajr* that officials of the Interior Ministry also agreed to empower the Israeli embassy in Cairo to renew the passport or to issue a passport for any of the visitors who wish to come back to Israel. Fahoum affirmed that the law is on his side and there is no regulation indicating that a citizen who wants to travel abroad has to abandon his citizenship.

ERRATUM

The issue of *Al Fajr* dated January 25, 1985 (Vol. IV, No. 247) contains an error on page 7. The population of al-Malha was 1940, according to the statistical data issued by the British Mandate government in 1945 — not 5000 as stated in the al-Malha article.

THIS WEEK'S CENSORSHIP

Following is a breakdown of censorship cuts for issue 248, February 1, 1985:

Number of articles submitted to censors	**18**
Number of articles totally censored out	**5**
Number of articles mutilated beyond use	**1**
Number of articles passed	**12**

West Bank Resistance Stepped Up

An unidentified gunman shot and slightly wounded the driver of an Israeli bus *en route* from Jerusalem to the Hebron area settlement of Gush Etzion. The attack occurred just before 7:00 pm January 30 near Solomon's Pools, south of Bethlehem.

Israeli forces quickly encircled the area, placed six villages under curfew and searched for the gunman. No one was reported arrested.

The driver of the bus continued south to Nevi Daniel settlement, despite his injury. He was later taken to Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital by settlers. The incident was the latest in a renewed wave of stone-throwing and petrol bomb attacks on Israeli settlers and soldiers in the occupied territories.

At least seven attacks on Israeli settlers or military vehicles involving Molotovs, grenades or stones were reported in various regions in the West Bank last week. Three settlers from Kiryat Arba were slightly injured January 28 at 8:00 pm when a No. 60 bus carrying settlers was stoned as it passed near Halhoul in the Hebron district. Israeli authorities arrested one resident on suspicion of throwing stones at the bus. Another bus travelling on Alon Highway between Michmas and Rimonim in the Ramallah area was stoned January 28. No casualties or damage was reported.

Dozens of residents on the northern mountain in Nablus were held for eight hours and interrogated at military headquarters in Nablus January 29 after a Molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli military vehicle travelling in Faisal Street in Nablus. No injuries were reported. A large number of Israeli soldiers arrived and besieged the quarter. Residents were arrested at 6:00 pm but released after eight hours for lack of evidence.

A Palestinian flag was hoisted on the tower of the former Cairo-Amman Bank in Nablus January 28. It was taken down by Israeli soldiers the next day. An Israeli vehicle was also stoned near Neve Tsov settlement in the Nablus district January 28. Screened windows were smashed but no injuries were reported.

A grenade was thrown at an Israeli bus in Qalqilya January 27. The bus, carrying 35 passengers, was travelling from Kfar Saba inside the "green line" to Emmanuel settlement. Israeli police investigators found two holes in the bus with grenade shrapnel around it. Two other Molotovs were thrown against Israeli vehicles January 25 in Qalqilya district. Two Israeli vehicles travelling by the Dheisheh refugee camp were also reported to have been hit by Molotovs January 24.

Israeli sources reported that the Israeli defence ministry is discussing the escalation in stoning incidents in the West Bank. Israeli newspapers reported the incidents as "PLO organisations escalating their activities in the occupied territories."

Israeli daily *Ma'ariv* quoted police sources in the Qalqilya area describing the recent attacks as "dangerous," especially in the wake of a long period of relative quiet. *(Translation from the local press).*

2000 Dunums Grabbed From Samu' For 7th Settlement

Israeli military authorities notified Palestinian landowners this week from the village of Samu' in the Hebron district, population 3000, of their intention to declare more than 2000 dunums of agricultural land government property. Landowners are planning to challenge the confiscation order in court.

Several Israeli officers, including the Israeli Custodian of Absentee Property, arrived in the village January 22 and met the village *mukhtars* to convey the confiscation order. The order simply stated that the authorities had declared the land government property and that farmers have 30 days to present objections against the decision to the Israeli military objections committee, at the West Bank military headquarters in Beit El. Standing Israeli regulations give the authorities power to declare unregistered land government property and lays responsibility to prove the contrary on the landowners.

Samu' *mukhtars* told *Al Fajr* that the land belonged to three tribes; al-Zhur, al-Bhaisat and Abu Ali tribes, all from the neighbouring village of Yatta. Residents say that the land, which is located north of Samu', is known as Wadi Abu Haddad, Khalet al-Sun', Majd al-Ba', Khalet Matar and al-Muntar. The land, which is mostly hilly, was used to grow different kinds of grain. Village residents say that the Israelis are planning to set up a settlement on their land. The village is surrounded by six settlements, the nearest of which is Yattir, located south of it.

Landowners are reportedly collecting their documents in order to file an official objection before the 30-day objection period expires.

The Israeli authorities previously confiscated more than 1000 dunums of land located at the southern side of the village for similar reasons. Ownership of the land is now being contested in court. *(Translation: Al Fajr, January 26, 1985).*

Defrauded Landowners Discover No WB Court Will Try Israelis

Legal representatives of 100 landowners in the Bethlehem district village of Obeidieh are finding no route of legal recourse in their fight to prove that deeds of sale for 4000 dunums of their land are forged. The main obstacle for their lawyers is the catch-22 that no Israeli can be tried in a West Bank court, and that local police refuse to accept complaints filed against Israelis. Over 100 landowners discovered in November 1983 that several applications had been sent to the land registration department fraudulently changing names of landowners.

After the discovery of a giant land forgery, advocates Usama Odeh and Abed Assali attempted to file complaints with the police in Bethlehem but the police in turn refused to accept them on the pretext that the case involved Israeli citizens. Military authorities do not allow Arab local courts to try Israelis in the occupied territories. Assali and Odeh then filed complaints with Jerusalem police but they were not accepted because the alleged forgery took place in the West Bank, which is out of their jurisdiction.

Assali and Odeh next turned to the Israeli legal advisor to the West Bank military government and again submitted their complaints. After long consultations, the attorney general permitted them to file a complaint with the West Bank courts. However, the attorney general claimed that there is no legal precedent for bringing Israeli citizens before West Bank courts.

Assali told *Al Fajr*, "The filing of the complaint is a necessary procedure for the progress of the land case. What the landbrokers did is an offence against the law which must be reported to the police and investigated in court." Assali added, "We will go to Israeli High Court if the forgery matter is not investigated."

On the legal front, the Israeli military objections committee had transferred the file of the forged documents of Obeidieh lands in the Bethlehem district on January 21 to officials in the land registration department in Bethlehem to check them and study the new map submitted by advocates Assali and Odeh. Members of the military objections committee also heard landowners, who affirmed that they would never sell their land plots in Hadaydieh, the area in question, one to four kilometres south of the village.

Representatives of Dekel and Jambo Construction Company claimed that villagers sold 4000 dunums in Block 4 and 5. Advocate Assali told *Al Fajr* that land broker Adeeb Shehadeh Barakat, a resident in Nabi Samwil village and Jamal Assa, the son of a *mukhtar* in Obeidieh, who used the official stamps of his father, forged signatures of landowners and sold the land. Advocate Assali said that Assa himself owns only 25 dunums. The military objections committee will convene again on February 14.

TO PROTEST 25% UNEMPLOYMENT

March Through Nazareth

Over 1500 Palestinian residents of Nazareth marched through the city's streets January 25 protesting the high local unemployment rate and discriminatory government and Histadrut policies towards the predominently Arab city. The protesters gathered opposite the city municipality and marched carrying banners and shouting anti-government slogans. They heard speakers and march organisers address the issue of the harsh economic situation in their city.

The march, organised by the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, was attended by DFPE members, municipality staff and unemployed city residents.

At 25 percent, Nazareth's unemployment rate is among the highest inside the 1948 borders of Israel. It equals that in remote Naqab communities and in the occupied territories. Nazareth has been registered recently in the Israeli Work Department as one of the ten most economically deprived cities in Israel.

According to Suhail Diab, a Front representative in the Israeli Histadrut and a march organiser, "The city of Nazareth has long suffered economic hardship, but now things are worse than ever due to the latest economic policies of the Israeli government." The recent Package Deal B, (which reduced government subsidies on many consumer products), the price increase that followed and the increase in taxes will all further increase unemployment and cause bankruptcies in the private sector, according to Diab.

Histadrut sources told *Al Fajr* that there are 3000 Nazareth workers among the 50,000 residents who are registered for unemployment benefits, but according to Diab this number does not reflect the "thousands of Nazareth residents who are unemployed but do not qualify

Continued on page 13.

Settlers Try to Expand by Force

An attempt by Israeli settlers to expand a nascent settlement into five dunums of land near the centre of Hebron January 30 was foiled when Palestinian owners of the land physically challenged the settlers. The area, called Tel Rmeidah, is adjacent to a settlement nucleus recently planted by Kiryat Arba settlers. The area was declared by Hebron military authorities a "closed military area." An Israeli government advisor on land deeds, Plia Albeck, had told the settlers the land was "Sephardi-owned" and that it was "permissible" to construct a fence to prevent Arab farmers from "trespassing." Scores of settlers reported to have arrived on the land in early morning and attempted to construct the fence around it. As owners of the land rushed towards them, a verbal fight broke out.

Minutes afterward Israeli troops arrived at the scene and dispersed settlers and landowners. The army announced later that Tel Rmeidah is a closed military area until further notice. The landowners, who fear they will lose their land to the settlers, drafted a letter of complaint to military occupation authorities in Hebron.

The land in question is owned by the Islamic *waqf* and is adjacent to an old Jewish cemetery. Jewish settlers have made several attempts in the past to take it over but this is the first time they received open government backing.

Israel's **Al-Anba'** Closes in Failure

The Israeli government Arabic language news organ, *Al Anba'*, announced this week that it will close as of January 31 for financial reasons.

In a front-page statement, the small circulating *Al Anba'* daily said that the paper's administration received a letter from the deputy director of the Israeli prime minister's office, Arye Shomer, informing them that the Israeli government had decided to stop funding the paper as of that date. *Al Anba'* said that the government decision was for reasons relating to the budget. Although the paper was imposed on all government-run institutions in Israel and the West Bank, including prisons, its distribution figures continued to be negligible. It was rarely found at newsstands.

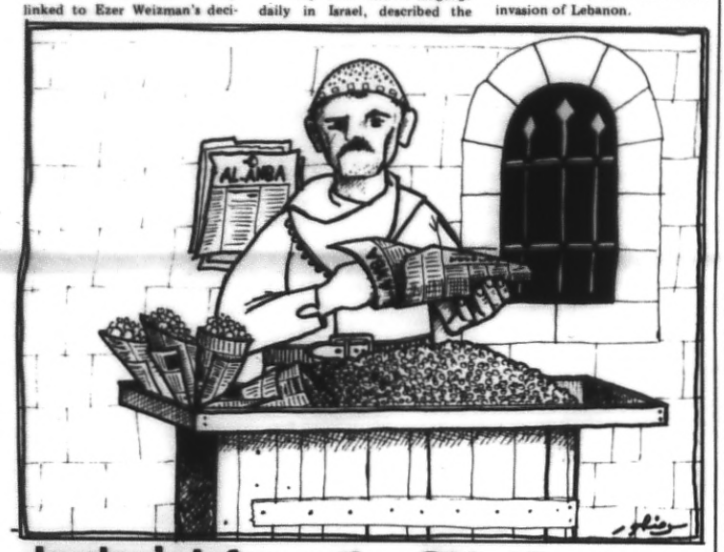
One employee in the paper, who refused to be identified, told *Al Fajr* that he was certain that the closure of the paper was due to political reasons. He said that the closure was directly linked to Ezer Weizman's decision to cancel the post of advisor to the Israeli prime minister on Arab affairs one month ago. The last advisor, Binyamin Gur Aryeh, is currently challenging the loss of his post with Tel Aviv Labour Court. The paper was under direct supervision of the Arab affairs advisor.

The employee said that *Al Anba'* employees were shocked and disappointed with the measure, especially since they were given only a few days' notice.

Israeli Ovadia Danon, chief editor at *Al Anba'*, said that the closure "was a mistake." Although he denied that it stemmed from political reasons, he indirectly blamed Minister Without Portfolio Ezer Weizman for closing down the paper. "How could a person who claims to serve Arab interests close a paper which serves Arabs?" he asked.

There was no sense of loss expressed by the Palestinian community. *Al Ittihad* daily, the Arabic language news organ of the Israeli Communist Party and the only other Arabic language daily in Israel, described the closure of *Al Anba'* as an indication of "political and economic bankruptcy." In its editorial January 29, *Al Ittihad* wrote that the paper was founded by the Israeli government to mislead, divide and frustrate the Arab people in Israel and the occupied territories. "The result, however, was the opposite; the paper's editors and employees were the ones misled and frustrated," it added.

AlAnba', which started publication in 1968, was notorious for its role in promoting forged land deals. The paper, which was rarely read in the West Bank, was used to publish ads for re-registration of land sales, in accordance with Jordanian law which states that second registration of land must be preceded by a 15-day notice in the local papers to allow any objectors to submit their objections. *Al Anba'* promoted Israeli government policies in regard to relations with Arab countries and Palestinians. It strongly supported the Camp David Accords and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.



Jordan's Information Chief Resigns Over Press Restrictions

Jordanian Minister of Information Leila Sharaf resigned her post January 28 in protest of the Jordanian government's decision to increase restrictions on the local press. Sharaf's resignation was described as the first open challenge to government policy from within in more than ten years.

Widow of the former prime minister, Abd al-Hamid Sharaf, the information minister spelled out her resignation in a six-page letter addressed to the Jordanian prime minister and distributed to the media by her private driver. The letter was published by the international media, but withheld from the Jordanian press. Jordanian Television carried a small news item stating that King Hussein issued a royal decree accepting Sharaf's resignation.

News reports emerging from Jordan said Sharaf had disappeared from Amman and that she might have left the country. In the letter, Sharaf said she was not ready to implement an ambiguous information policy which does not serve the interest of Jordan or Jordanians. She particularly criticised recent government steps, under direct supervision from King Hussein, to clamp down on the local press. One day before her resignation, the monarch instructed his prime minister in an open address read on Jordan TV to establish better control over the press.

In her resignation letter, Sharaf, who is of Lebanese origin, asserted that she was forced to suspend her plans to draw up a clear information policy and that contacts with the prime ministry were severed after she was informed of the new guidelines. She also expressed her conviction that the government should not interfere in the daily affairs of the populace and that it should clarify, not distort, the facts for its citizens.

Sharaf, who was appointed information minister after the establishment of the new government headed by Ahmad Obeidat on January 18, 1984, also criticised the way government decisions are made. She said important decisions are made without discussion in the cabinet and that the press is also forbidden to air the issues.

Furthermore, Sharaf said she had told Jordanian journalists that she would quit her post the day she found herself unable to defend the freedom of the press.

"Struggle '85"

Israeli politicians from the oriental Jewish community held a press conference January 29 in Jerusalem to announce the formation of a protest movement called "Struggle '85," to represent communities who are discriminated against on an economic and social basis. The movement, organised by MK Charlie Biton of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and former MK Saadiya Marciano, includes several small factions like Biton's former Black Panther group, the Front for Poor Neighbourhoods and "Shahak" a Labour Party affiliated group to represent slum areas.

Shahak member Didi Ben Shitrit, a West Jerusalem councilman, added that the new movement will also act as an advocate for the causes of Arabs inside Israel and will oppose all forms of Jewish settlement in the occupied territories.

The movement said it had collected 500 signatures already. "The idea for this movement sprang out of the hardship and the slums of the country," said Marciano at the opening of the conference.

Biton told reporters that the new movement's main objectives are to fight social injustice in Israel, including high unemployment, widespread poverty and racial discrimination. He said the national unity government's economic measures served to sharpen poverty and decrease the possibility of improving the standard of living. The movement also called for an end to the occupation of Lebanon.

Kach Assaults MK Mi'ari At Tel Aviv Lecture

MK Mohammed Mi'ari, head of the Progressive List for Peace (PLP), was physically attacked January 23 by supporters of Rabbi Kahane's racist Kach movement in Tel Aviv and the right-wing Tehiya Party who tried to storm a hall where the MK was giving a lecture to Sephardi Jews who sought improved relations with Arabs.

Kach supporters attempted to stop Mi'ari's lecture at the New Direction Centre in the Hatikva quarter.

The saboteurs hurled empty cans and bottles in every direction, smashing windows of the New Direction Centre and damaging Mi'ari's car. Kahane's supporters screamed insults at Mi'ari and complained that the Arab population prevented Kahane from entering Um al-Fahm and other Arab villages while Mi'ari was allowed to come to Tel Aviv. Mi'ari then countered: "First of all, Palestinian residents refuse to let the leader of fascism into their villages and towns. Secondly, I went to Tel Aviv when I received an invitation to speak as part of a cultural and political programme. Thirdly, contrary to Kahane's fascist aims, I wanted to bridge and maintain ties between the socially-politically oppressed Jews and the socially-politically oppressed Palestinians."

Outside the hall, Kach extremists shouted slogans against the PLO, the prophet Mohammed and the Islamic religion. They obstructed traffic on Hatikva street, bringing a large number of policemen to the scene, who prevented the fascist group from breaking into the centre.

After the lecture, Mi'ari was unable to leave the hall to walk the three-metre distance to his car because of the hostile crowd. After a half-hour delay, the MK finally left the hall around 11:00 pm surrounded by policemen. It was then that he was attacked by the Kach thugs, who threw empty bottles at him. He was not hurt. Police made no arrests.

Mi'ari refuses to file a complaint against his attackers. "Kahane's phenomenon is completely rejected," he said. "I refuse to deal with his supporters in the courtroom."

2Najah U. Employees Arrested from Homes

The Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced Jihad Fahmi Salim, 22, to nine months in prison on a charge of writing grafitti and singing nationalist songs.

Salim, a resident of Nablus and a student at Najah National University, was accused and convicted of writing pro-PLO slogans on walls in Nablus one year ago and of singing nationalist songs relating to the 20th anniversary of the Palestine revolution and to the war in Lebanon, during the anniversary festival held at Najah University January 1, 1985. Salim was arrested on January 7 and has since been held at al-Fara'a detention camp, northeast of Nablus.

The heavy sentence was served because of a previous suspended term of nine months, the youth's lawyer said. According to Israeli military orders, any suspended term automatically becomes effective in the case of a repeated violation during the period of the suspended term. Lawyer Felicia Langer said the military judge agreed with her argument that the military order was unjust, especially since the charges were minor ones, and he issued a recommendation to change the regulation.

Another Najah student, Husam Mahmoud Othman, was released January 23 after 12 days in detention. Othman was accused of possessing banned books. The Nablus military court released him for lack of evidence.

The Dawn
AL FAJR
AL FAJR – Jerusalem Palestinian Weekly

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Albatross in Arabic

The Israeli government decided to cease its publication of the 16-year-old *Al Anba'* newspaper as of February 1, 1985 for budgetary reasons. The decision was an expression of the Israeli government's failure to "win minds and hearts" – to reap the anticipated benefits from publishing an Arabic daily to propagandise the Palestinian Arabs.

Since the creation of the Israeli state, the Israeli government has modeled itself on its colonial predecessor, the British, to direct and control information reaching the oppressed population – the Palestinians. On the level of the mass media, *Al Anba'* newsaper, in addition to Israel Radio's 17-hour Arabic programme and the government TV's two to three hours per day, played a traditional role of disinformation and distortion – a sophisticated game of psychological warfare.

The Israeli-directed Arabic daily, published under other names but since 1968 as *Al Anba'*, was given the best possible facilities. It was imposed on, and in some cases was the only Arabic reading material, in institutions controlled directly by the Israeli government: schools, government offices and prisons. It was also awarded the best of distribution facilities through the state apparatus, whether this was in Israel proper or in the Israeli-occupied territories. However, its sales never ventured past those guaranteed by the government, thus defeating all real purpose to publishing the paper.

Incapable of establishing any credibility and unable to pass off Israeli policies to the intended readership [the Arab population, in the case of *Al Anba'*] the paper shifted from being a non-profitable but potentially useful economic burden to an albatross.

Finally the Israeli government put up its hands and withdrew financial support, ultimately putting an end to the publication.

We, Palestinians, look forward to the day when the Israeli occupation becomes a non-profitable, useless enterprise.

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Palestine Spokesman in Washington Celebrates Revolution's 20th Anniversary

by Ghassan Bishara
Our Washington, DC Correspondent

"...The PNC has drawn the general outlines for the direction of the movement... it is the responsibility of the leadership to formulate a concrete policy..." This was said by Hassan Abd al-Rahman, the Palestine Information Office director, in Washington, DC, in a conversation about celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Palestinian revolution. This occasion was attended by about 500 people, including about 27 diplomatic representatives from Arab and friendly countries with ambassadors among them.

The Washington, DC celebration, though an annual event, was different this year from years past. Those who attended, Palestinians, Arabs, American blacks and Jews, were saddened by the tragic assassination of Fahd Qawasmeh, PLO Executive Committee member and the expelled mayor of Hebron, on the one hand, but pleased with the holding of the 17th session of the (PNC) Palestine National Council in Amman. Those attending, including some Palestinians never seen before in such occasion, "came out to express their solidarity to their leadership," Hassan Abd al-Rahman said.

The "outpouring of support of Palestinians observed during these celebrations," said Abd al-Rahman, "... is not only from Washington, DC Arabs." Rahman, who has been travelling in other parts of the US and the Caribbean, said he noticed "the same Palestinian support, especially after the PNC, to their leadership." He said that Palestinians are expressing their fear that "their destiny is in danger," adding, "it is only natural at moments of crises that nations and communities rise to protect... valuable achievements." For Palestinians, this would be the PLO and its leaders.

Had the dissidents been aware of the Palestinian people's sense of achievement and their determination to defend it, "they wouldn't have done what they did," Rahman said. From the Palestinian people's perspective, however, "they [dissidents] are an isolated [and] extremely marginal group of individuals," he continued. These people, he continued, do not apparently understand Palestinian aspirations. The pouring participation in the Fatah celebrations, said another Palestinian in the audience, is a glaring proof that the dissidents have truly become marginal in the Palestinian arena.

The celebrations for the 20th anniversary show a wide margin of international support as well. Twenty-seven nations, Arabs and friendly African, non-aligned and Eastern bloc countries, sent representatives to attend the celebrations at the George Washington University, Marvin Centre.

Among them were representatives of the embassies of China, Turkey, Indonesia, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the USSR, as well as Arab ambassadors from Jordan, UAE and Bahrain.

"Twenty Years Closer"

The PLO now will seek cohesiveness among Palestinians and within Arab ranks, said Abd al-Rahman, so as to enable them to argue better for their case. The convening of the 17th session of the PNC, he continued, was the "culmination of one stage upon which the leaders must build the strategy of action.

"We are twenty years closer" to achieving our objectives, Rahman said in talking about the next stage of PLO struggle. He went on to argue that had therevolutionnot started twenty years ago, "we would probably be 200 years behind." Another achievement since 1965 is "the creation of Palestinian national cohesiveness in the context of... nationhood and peoplehood," said Rahman.

The PNC, which was held in Amman in late Novemebr 1984, "was a new foundation... on which to build," Rahman said of the future. After the Beirut and then the Tripoli experiences, "the whole structure of the Palestinian movement was shaken [and] the convening of the PNC came as a solidification of the foundation for this structure." The PNC, he continued, had set a general outline for PLO direction and struggle. It also defined the relationship between the PLO and Jordan, the PLO's position in relation to Egypt, and between the PLO and the whole world. Rahman added, "Now it is the responsibility of the leadership to formulate a concrete policy or a programme of action... that corresponds to the challenge that we are facing." The Palestinian question "should never be relegated to a second position on the international agenda," but should always be on the front burner of world attention.

"We are twenty years closer." Another achievement since 1965 is "the creation of Palestinian national cohesiveness in the context of... nationhood and peoplehood."

— Hassan Abd al-Rahman

In order to maintain world interest in the Palestinian question, there should be a consolidation of the Arab front behind Palestinian activities, Abd al-Rahman said. He confirmed the fragmented nature of Arab politics, adding, "It is not beyond repair," calling the objective of Arab cohesiveness "our most urgent task." He said that Chairman Arafat has been working hard since Amman to reach an acceptable form of Arab understanding. Therefore, he continued, "We feel that the convening of an [Arab] summit, whether with full participation of the Arabs or of the majority of them, is a number one objective on our agenda."

The idea of an Arab summit, Rahman said, has been rejected only by Libya and Syria, sounding his hope, however, that they will eventually join in. National interest, he said, should supersede "narrow personal interests" of some Arab leaders. It is the responsibility of all Arabs to check Israel's advances, and Arab understanding is a good way of doing that. Arranging the Palestinian house and then the Arab house,"...I am sure, will be a step in the right direction and then the international community will respond," Rahman concluded.

The assassination of Fahd Qawasmeh cost the Palestinian people and Palestinian cause a "capable man and a man of conscience." He also said that the Palestinian people lost a man of action who was most needed at such a time. Hassan said that the campaign of assassinations against Palestinian leaders "has been going on for many years; now only the hands have changed but the objective remained." Assassinations, he concluded, are "indications of the desperation of those responsible for them," and the PLO, he added, won't be deterred. "On the contrary, they will strengthen our commitment to pursue the struggle," until Palestinian victory.

OPINION

AL FAJR invites our readers to contribute letters, articles and opinions. Contributions must be signed, but names may be withheld upon request.

Al-Bassa - Graveyard of a Palestinian Village

I was on my way to investigate the vandalisation of Christian and Muslim holy places in the vicinity of Shlomi — a development town in the north of the country — when I recalled the Terza Angalevicz case and public storm it aroused. Both the government and the public had been outraged by the two ultra-Orthodox Jews who removed Angalevicz's body from a Jewish graveyard [because she was a Gentile, according to religious law] and then dumped the body in a Muslim cemetery on the outskirts of Ramle.

Standing in the Christian cemetery of al-Bassa, [a Palestinian village near the Lebanese border, destroyed by Israeli forces in 1948; most of the villagers are refugees in Lebanon — ed] I beheld a similar outrage. But this time it was not mediated by television or radio news broadcasts. I saw with my own eyes how the graves had been vandalised and desecrated, and I heard tell of how the Greek Catholic church was being used as a pen for livestock.

Standing there, the term "abandoned property" took on palpable form. The Christian cemetery was once used by the residents of the Arab village of Bassa. They left their village in 1948. Some went to Lebanon and others resettled in the Galilee; the latter are currently waging a public campaign for the preservation of their ancestors' burial sites.

Gaining access to the Christian cemetery is no problem; there is no gate and definitely no guard. A few metres away I saw two workers digging a pit for a septic tank — the property of the nearby Zoglovak Meat Factory. The earth they had dug up had been dumped on the land of the cemetery.

Scattered Skulls

All of the grave sites were open. The first ossuary I looked into had been vandalised — a quick look inside left no doubt about that. The vandals must have been looking for something, for the coffins were overturned and bones were scattered about. There was a skull lying in the corner of the vault. Altogether, it was a devastating scene.

I entered the almost totally dark ossuary and came across a second skull, this time that of an animal, probably a sheep. The second, third and fourth ossuaries I looked into had also been vandalised. Why did they desecrate a holy site? The last vault I visited resembled the other ossuaries from the outside, but this time the vandals left identifying traces. There were 50 empty tins of motor oil inside, and the markings on the tins were those of the Israeli army.

Three hundred metres down the dirt road, my attention was stopped by three solitary graves. A former resident of al-Bassa who was acting as my guide told me that these graves were the last remains of the Muslim graveyard. As we approached the church, the stillness was broken by a barking dog. Luckily for us, he was tied up to the altar and couldn't get near us. The stench in the church made it hard to breathe. The hall was in all likelihood being used as a pen for a *flock of goats or sheep. Quite a layout!* There was a feeding station, a drinking station and a place for the animals to bed down.

We went on to the mosque. The door was securely locked but when we went around to the back of the building, we found everything wide open... A few pigeons took wing as we entered. The hall of the mosque, like the church we had just visited, was being used as a barn. The animals must have been out at pasture during our visit.

The last church on our list was on the opposite hill. My guide told me that it had been on the outskirts of the village. The Israeli army left its mark here as well. A few metres away from the building there was an abandoned bunker, but there weren't any signs around to inform us whether this was a military area or off limits.

Reactions

The first person I turned to for a reaction was the Archbishop of the Greek Catholic Church, Maximus Salum, the chief overseer of the administration of church property. "I don't know a thing about the vandalisation of those holy places," said Salum. "It could be that they were sold before I was appointed to my position. Right now I can't comment on the affair."

When asked if he planned to take steps to remedy the situation, he answered in the negative. The archbishop's indifferent attitude leads one to assume that the sites in question are no longer owned by the Greek Orthodox Church. However, the sale of a cemetery is quite rare because it cannot be said to belong to an individual or an institution.

In the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Christian Department the affair is well known. Uri Mur, the chief of the department, told me that the ministry had received a letter from attorney Wakim Wakim on behalf of some of the former residents of al-Bassa. Wakim complained bitterly about the desecration of the holy places and demanded a thorough investigation into the whole affair. "On our part," said Mur, "we have launched an internal investigation into the matter and we plan to visit the area next week to check out the details of the affair and to speak to the officials concerned. Step B will be to collect funds for repairing and cleaning up the churches, mosques and cemeteries."

Attorney Wakim Wakim, who has been dealing with the legal aspects of the vandalisation of the holy places, turned to the Ministry of Religious Affairs the archbishop of the Greek Catholic Church and the police, over a month ago. The ministry promptly replied, informing Wakim that the affair was being investigated. The archbishop did not see fit to reply to attorney Wakim's letter and the police embarked on an investigation of their own.

Attorney Wakim: "I lodged a complaint with the police and they opened a file. I visited the area with a police investigator. The complaint was lodged over a month ago and, nothing has yet happened. As far as I know, no one has yet been interrogated. This reveals the apathy of the police in regard to this sensitive matter."

Wakim went on to say that the former residents of al-Bassa were not prepared to let matters rest even if it turns out that the holy places are no longer owned by the church. They are prepared to go to court. "It is unthinkable that the cemetery could have been sold," said attorney Wakim. "Legally speaking, the sale, if it actually took place, can be annulled on the grounds that it affronts the feelings of my clients, who wish to preserve their respect for their forefathers." *(Translation: Al Hamishmar, January 2, 1985)*

Who is Israel?

by Rabbi Moshe Hirsch

The "Who is a Jew" issue appears on the surface as a racist issue which contains a stigma of a cause for anti-Semitism. But in reality it is a pure political issue being urged on by religious Zionists who wish to establish a "state according to the Torah" (theocracy) - infringing on one of the thirteen priciples of the Jewish faith and in defiance of a Divine oath which charges the Jewish people not to force their way back to the Holy Land against the wishes of those residing there. They are taking advantage of the present political structure of the Zionist parliament in order to realise their unholy aims. The Jewish religion is not dependent on the laws of the imposter "Jewish" state, called "Israel." Orthodox Jews, who have chosen a traditional path in life for themselves and their children, are not affected by a law effected by a secular body masked with clerical stooges in their employ. The way of life they have chosen is open to all peoples on earth and is not exclusive to a limited group. Conversion — acceptance of a specific tradition — is a prerequisite to becoming part of this group. It is obvious that conversion to any group must be restricted to the by-laws of this particular group. If one fails to comply with these standards, he cannot be accepted - no matter how the secular government defines the conversion. The addition of the word "halacha" (religious law) to the secular law has no bearing whatsoever on those converting to Jewry. On the other hand, the government's attitude towards its citizenry ("law of return") is definitely one of racism, even if its laws of conversion are not restricted to "halacha." Why should an indigenous people be ousted and considered as outcasts by a government which rules and dominates them?

Those advocating the inclusion of the word "halacha" into the secular code of law of the Zionist government were dealt a severe blow by the government's so-called "humane" act of bringing to its shore thousands of Ethiopian "Jewish" immigrants. Taking advantage of the plight of these pitiful people, they bolstered their "cannon fodder" by attempting to incorporate these people into their fold. These "Jews" were not practicing the accepted Jewish way of life. Their marriages and divorces were questionable according to Jewish dogma — therefore placing their legitimacy in doubt. Their previous "conversions" are not considered effective, theologically. The Orthodox religious leaders ruled that they may be incorporated into the Jewish nation - just like members of any other peoples - on the condition that they accept anew the Jewish way of life and undergo a conversion under the supervision of Orthodox Rabbis.

With immigration to the so-called Paradise, "Israel," coming to an almost complete halt, the desperation of the Zionists brought them to fabricate another "magic carpet" and ingather a "lost tribe" of Israel. Ironically, the powers that prevail are compelling the religious state schools to integrate the Ethiopian children into their network, whereas during the previous "magic carpet" project, which brought over fifty thousand Orthodox practicing Yemenite Jews to Zionist conversion, their children were denied religious schooling and were forced to accept the new way of life introduced by those who enacted the transformation of Judaism to Zionism. How can the Zionists attempt to appendage the Ethiopian "lost tribe" to the Jewish body if the Ethiopian "Jewish" composition is not in accord with religious "halacha"?

An Ethiopian immigrant in military uniform with his father in Jerusalem.

In conclusion, the obvious question which should be posed by all is not "who is a Jew," but rather "who is 'Israel?' " The state of "Israel" does not represent the Jewish people and is not representative of the Jewish way of life. Why should Jews and non-Jews alike be led astray by those who manipulate holy terms to attain unholy goals? "Holy Land," "Israel," "Chief Rabbis," "Wailing Wall," "Holy Sites", etc., should be left in the hands of G-d fearing clergy, and not in the hands of political imposters.

Lifta:
A Ghost-town on Jerusalem's Doorstep

by Awad Abdel Fattah

LEFT: The village school is still open – for Israeli students. RIGHT: The village of Lifta down the mountain. Ramot settlement, built on Lifta land, is visible in the background./BA photo.

At the western approach to Jerusalem, below the main Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road, there is a grouping of abandoned stone houses along the slopes and the foot of a mountain. It is a poignant introduction for visitors to Jerusalem. The houses are the visible remains of the tragedy of Lifta, once a large, prosperous and sophisticated Palestinian village. Its original population is now dispersed throughout the West Bank and outside Palestine. But families from Lifta, like so many Palestinians who were forcibly expelled in 1948, return frequently to gaze at their birthplace and temporarily satisfy their strong nostalgic feeling for what was once their home.

As we drove through the Judaised part of the village, where only a few scattered Palestinian houses remain, our companion, Daoud Salami, a native of the village, sought refuge in anonymity. He took off his *hattah*, the traditional headdress, and preferred to sit in the darkened back seat of the car. Salami, now a resident in al-Am'ari refugee camp near Ramallah and an Islamic religion teacher, never imagined that he would one day hide his identity in his birthplace. Outside the fence of the former school, near the central bus station, Salami witnessed Israeli pupils playing in the schoolyard. He sighed and said, without pointing towards the school, "I studied here. They have taken it too."

Unlike many other evacuated Palestinian villages within the 1948 borders of Israel – over 350 were destroyed – Lifta has been left without traditional landmarks to testify to the Palestinian character of the village. The *minaret* of the mosque disappeared long ago; only its walls still stand amidst the arched-ceilinged houses, but from afar it is unrecognisable. Said Salami, "The houses will continue to be a strong testimony to our presence, unless the Israelis decide to destroy them in the future and rid themselves of evidence of their crime."

The place where the houses still stand was known by the population as the "old village." The "new village," which extended eastward on the crest of the mountain, has been planted with modern Israeli multi-storey buildings on the sites of the old houses on Lifta land. A number of the original houses with distinctive orange roof tiles can be seen among the tall Israeli buildings. These old homes, inhabited now by Jewish immigrants, have not been altered.

This newer, higher part of the village is inhabited by the Israeli central bus station, *The Jerusalem Post* newspaper offices, Israel TV and Radio station, the Israeli Knesset and a new Hilton Hotel. At this moment, Israeli modernisation is creeping towards what remains of the old village. A wide road is being built and Israeli bulldozers are heading towards some of the old village houses. It is still not known whether the Israelis have decided to destroy these old homes – witnesses to so much Palestinian history – or not.

The village houses, some as high as two and even three storeys, have small dome-like roofs. According to Ahmad Abu Leil, a Liftawi in his 90's, the roofs were made of lime and earth, "and this is stronger than cement."

The small garden plots, which are traditionally demarcated by fences of randomly piled stones, are completely neglected and overgrown with weeds. The village's cemetery survived no better: it extends over 10 hilly dunums, and the individual gravestones are hidden by the tall grass. There is no fence to mark off the area and prevent people from wandering about or littering the holy site.

Before 1948 about 2550 people lived in Lifta. According to the statistical data issued by the British government in 1948, the total area of land owned by villagers was 8743 dunums, while the area of the village itself totalled 324 dunums. Lifta's land extended until Shufat and the western edge of Mount Scopus, north of Jerusalem. All of this valuable land was taken over by the Israelis.

The Abu Leil family was doubly disenfranchised: the family fled from Lifta in 1947 and settled on another piece of their land in the area now called the "French Hill." After 1967 they were robbed of their land a second time, to make way for the sprawling French Hill apartments. The Abu Leil family lives in four small houses on four dunums in the same place. The rest of their land, which they estimate at 50 dunums, was confiscated and today student dormitories for Hebrew University and an Israeli school have sprouted up, along with a luxury Hyatt Regency Hotel, now under construction. Ahmad Abu Leil has lost most of his hearing, a disability that at least mercifully prevents him from registering the sounds of the 'battering ram' heavy machinery drilling into his land. He remarked, "Neither the Ottomans nor the British nor the Jordanians had touched one's right to his land, but these (the Israelis) are criminals and inhuman." He told *Al Fajr* that he has been summoned for interrogation several times over the last 17 years to pressure him into signing over his rights to the land where he now lives.

Lifta's population did not depend solely on agriculture for subsistance, as most of the Palestinian villages did before 1948. Other sources of livelihood were also available, like stone cutting and trading. In addition, "About 150 people worked in the education department as teachers, and in the public works, the *tabu* land registry, health and agricultural departments," said Daoud Salami. But, he added, more than half the population relied on traditional agriculture: cultivation of grain, olives, almonds, figs and grapes.

Lifta was known for its relatively high number of educated people. There was a coeducational elementary school as early as 1985, something which did not exist in any of the neighbouring villages. But later, female students were transferred to separate schools in Jerusalem. Just three years before the 1948 tragedy, a special girls' school for traditional skills was opened at the initiative of a local woman, Arifa al-Najjar.

The "citified" youth of Lifta organised for themselves a sports club and scouts movement and used them for sports, cultural and political activities.

The zionists viewed Lifta as a serious strategic worry. The village was almost the largest in the Jerusalem area and it bordered Jewish neighbourhoods from the west. Its residents were also very militantly opposed to colonialism and occupation. More than 150 men were involved in the military activities against the British occupation forces, according to Abu Leil. He recalls that the British frequently accused Lifta's residents of aiding Palestinian revolutionaries, and consequently round-ups of the whole village were carried out by the British forces from time to time to search for weapons and Palestinian fighters. "The British forces entered each house time and again and turned everything upside down, including the food stocks," Abu Daoud remarked.

While the British forces were pursuing a hard-line policy towards Lifta's population, the zionist organisations in the neighbouring paramilitary settlements and neighbourhoods, such as Romema, Mahaneh Yehuda and Giv'at Sha'ul (which now covers Deir Yassin), undertook military training in the open, with few repercussions from the British.

The village fighters were stationed outside the village in the mountains and the valleys. They entered the village only secretly and could not stay for long periods. "When the partition plan was issued on November 29th, 1947," said Salami, "tension rose between us and the Jewish settlers in the area."

Salami, who was 20 at the time, remembers, "It was then that the prominent national leaders realised the high state of readiness of the zionists and their plans to conquer the village."

The village leaders were careful not to rush into open battle before making thorough preparations. They started to organise the villagers and brought in 100 rifles through various ways. But these light weapons fell far short of facing the heavily-armed and highly-trained zionist troops who surprised Lifta with a comprehensive attack. In December 1947, in less than five days, the village was completely emptied of people, one month after declaration of the UN partition plan. The British Mandate forces did nothing to stop the attack or the flight of the whole population of Lifta.

About half of Lifta's population fled across the Jordan River and the rest remained in camps in the West Bank. About 20 families now live in small houses in al-Am'ari refugee camp and more than 50 are scattered in Ramallah and its area villages and in Jerusalem. The families in towns are now better established but those still living in refugee camps, without their lands and homes, have little opportunity to advance in life.

Palestinians Maligned by Hebrew Press

Israelis know little about the people whose land they occupy. Their school curriculum denies Palestinian political and social history and the government-controlled TV and radio avoid mentioning "Palestinian" in any connection other than "terrorist." The presumed independent Israeli press, the main source of current news for most Israelis, behaves no better, as Awad Abdel Fattah relays in the following story.

The mainstream Israeli press has a reputation in the West for being democratic because it is frequently critical of the policies of its government. Those who laud the democracy of the Israeli press rarely pause to consider its outlook on Palestinian issues. In that arena, its record is not impressive.

A brief survey of Israeli newspapers reveals that the major papers do not differ significantly from one another on Palestinian issues, despite substantial variation between them on domestic issues. Their democratic scope is narrow and selective. The "non-Jews" do not fall within its boundaries. On the contrary, the Palestinian population is generally ignored or slandered by most mainstream Israeli newspapers through various means — the use of demeaning terminology, favouritism for stories portraying Arabs in a negative light, reliance on only Israeli sources and "trial by newspaper," the practice of condemning detained Arabs for crimes before any evidence against them is confirmed. The two evening newspapers *Ma'ariv* and *Yediot Aharanot* and the new morning *Hadashot* are the worst offenders.

Antoine Shalhat, a Palestinian journalist and a regular reader of the Israeli Hebrew press, told *Al Fajr*, "It is very sad that despite the fact that there have been major political changes in the national Palestinian struggle re-enforcing and publicising Palestinian nationalism, the Israeli press has undergone only superficial changes with regard to its attitudes towards the Palestinians." Hani Issawi, a Hebrew-Arabic translator for a Palestinian newspaper echoed the same attitude: "The Israeli newspapers have failed to rid themselves of their prejudices towards Palestinians and to deal with their affairs objectively."

Not all the Israeli newspapers are as biased as *Yediot Aharanot*, *Ma'ariv* and *Hadashot* in handling issues related to Palestinians. For example the Hebrew *Al Hamishmar* — the mouthpiece of Mapam; *HaAretz* — an independent liberal paper, *Davar* — the organ of the Histadrut workers' federation and the English *Jerusalem Post*, which is close to the Labour Party, are more restrained than the evening newspapers. They don't often publish articles reflecting open anti-Arab hatred or urging the use of force against Arabs, as *Yediot*, *Ma'ariv* and *Hadashot* are prone to do.

Press Mirrors Government Views

Overall, the Israeli press is strongly committed to serving the interests of the state of Israel. "The close relationship between the Israeli press and the zionist establishment and the fact that the Israeli press upholds zionism explains why the Israeli press has served as the mouthpiece of its government," Michal Shwartz, an Israeli progressive and a local journalist, told *Al Fajr*.

The Israeli press does not separate itself from the Israeli zionist establishment. The variety of opinions published in the Israeli newspapers does not alter this fact; they are differences of opinion over tactics rather than objectives.

According to Shwartz, the Israeli press willingly carries out self-censorship. For example, if the publication of a certain article might threaten "the security of the state" — given a broad interpretation by Israeli editors — they prefer not to publish it. Shwartz brought up the example of the number of soldiers who have been killed in Lebanon. She says that although the Israeli public does not believe the official figure for the number of dead, none of the Israeli newspapers, liberal or extreme, have been ready to refute this figure. Even the existence of Ansar detention camp in south Lebanon was not published in the Israeli press "until it became the talk of the town," said Shwartz.

Well-known moderate writers like Zvi Bar'el, *(HaAretz)*, Dani Rubinstein, *(Davar)* Yehuda Litani *(HaAretz)*, Amos Kanaan *(Yediot)* and others who are critical of oppressive and discriminatory Israeli policies against Palestinians in the occupied territories reflect only their own viewpoints and often deviate from the official political line of their newspapers. It is true that Israeli democracy permits publication of dissenting opinions. But dissent has limits. Even these writers, who can be strident opponents of occupation, do not avow support for a Palestinian state under the leadership of the PLO. This is consistent with the general policy of all the mainstream newspapers, which is to play down and ignore Palestinian national identity in general, whether expressed by Israeli citizens inside the green line or by residents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Special Terms For Palestinians

The government policy of belittling all things Palestinian or nationalistic — characterised by Prime Minister Golda Meir's famous 1967 statement "There is no Palestinian people" — is carefully observed by the journalistic establishment in Israel. To avoid any mention of "Palestinians" or "Palestinian people," the Israeli newspapers, both liberal and right-wing, have opted for their own terms to deny the national existence of the Palestinian people. For instance, Palestinians who remained within the 1948 borders of Israel are described in ethnic rather than national terms, as the "Arab minority," the "sons of the minorities", "the Arab sector," "Israeli Arabs." The phrase "Palestinian personalities" or "figures" is never used to describe leaders or well-known people.

For instance, Palestinians who remained within the 1948 borders of Israel are described in ethnic rather than national terms, as the "Arab minority," "some of the minorities," "the Arab sector," "Israeli Arabs."

With regard to the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, most of the Israeli newspapers now use the Likud's semantic terms "Judea and Samaria," or the phrase "administered territories." Recently *The Jerusalem Post* and *Al Hamishmar* have begun using both terms. The *Post* has been known to use three different terms — of varied political meaning — in the same article: West Bank, Judea and Samaria, and administered territories. With the exception of *Al Hamishmar* and the weekly *HaOlam HaZeh*, a leftist paper that reflects the political viewpoint of its editor, Uri Avneri, who supports a Palestinian state under the leadership of the PLO, all Israeli papers avoid using the term occupied territories.

A Leadership Denied

The Israeli press has always portrayed Palestinian national figures as nationalist extremists, thus preparing the way for action against them. Palestinians who cooperate with the Israelis, like village league members and the few mayors who cooperate with the Village League, are consistently depicted as moderate and rational. This applies also to Mapam's *Al Hamishmar*, which recently ran a series of articles by its West Bank correspondent, Pinhas Anbery, about the Jordan option. He terms those who support the Jordanian option "moderates" and those who oppose it "extremists."

"There is no Palestinian people" Golda Meir's famous 1967 non-statement

Moreover, there is a definitely asymmetrical selection of newsworthy items on Palestinians. Little reporting on Palestinian culture or politics appears but news which depicts Palestinians in a negative light appears frequently and is given prominent coverage.

Family disputes and quarrels in Palestinian villages occupy an inordinate amount of press space compared to the destruction of Palestinian houses, confiscation of land, the closure of universities, arrests, or the severe lack of development in Palestinian villages, which are ignored by most of the papers. For example, the fight which broke out between two *hamulas* (extended families) in the Galilee village of Kufr Manda last summer was played up in the Israeli press. *HaAretz* ran a two-page feature with pictures in its weekly supplement.

No Palestinian Sources

For many problems of concern to Palestinians, the primary sources of information for Israeli journalists are Israeli officials, the police, the military government or other establishment circles. This does not mean the Israeli press always lacks objectivity in covering Palestinian issues. *Al Hamishmar* and *HaAretz* might carry good coverage of a Palestinian demonstration being forcibly dispersed by the Israeli army, or an arrest campaign.

But this is not the journalistic rule. *HaAretz* and *Yediot* published a news item November 30 about the arrest of a Palestinian lawyer from Um al-Fahm which lacked journalistic objectivity. The papers published only the police view on the case, and reported that the lawyer was accused of heading a "violent cell which planned to settle accounts with people in the area on a personal and political basis."

The lawyer was released three weeks later and the charge proved baseless. *HaAretz* and *Yediot* used no source other than the police. They had not visited the village where the lawyer lives to meet his family and hear another view of the affair. This omission was especially grave given that the lawyer's colleagues were calling the arrest a political frame-up.

In general, Israeli newspapers are satisfied with quoting only official sources about arrest cases and ignoring the victim.

Incitement

The Israeli press is skilled at arousing public wrath against Palestinians, especially those living inside Israel. If a Palestinian flag is hoisted in a village in the Galilee or the Triangle; if a stone is thrown at an Israeli car; if a Palestinian is accused of murdering an Israeli; or if there is a demonstration against a land confiscation, the Israeli press rushes to fill its pages with condemnatory articles against the general Palestinian community in Israel, and warns against what is often called "unrestrained Arab nationalism." Terms such as "dangerous phenomenon," "time bomb," "the Israeli Arabs are becoming extreme and hostile to the state," often appear in Israeli papers.

Trial By Newspaper

Recently two incidents swept the Israeli press into a whirlwind of incitement against the Palestinians in Israel: last year's kidnapping and brutal killing of Dany Katz, an Israeli teenager from Haifa, and the murder of a female soldier, Hadas Kedmi, last December.

In the first case, five Palestinians, three from Sakhnin and two from Haifa, have been charged. Although the prosecution has not yet provided concrete evidence linking any of the accused to the crime, the Israeli press, mainly the Hebrew dailies, promoted a fear-and-hate campaign against the Palestinian community. *Yediot* and *Ma'ariv* ran interviews with the child's father who made racist statements against Arabs, calling them "murderers" and "animals." He demanded the destruction of the houses of the accused and the expulsion of their families, and he threatened that "if they do not learn this way then all Arabs must be expelled." The papers highlighted what the police and the father said. None of the lawyers defending the accused were interviewed, nor were the families of the accused, despite the lack of evidence in the case. Statements issued by Sakhnin's local council and other local council heads condemning the murder and calling on the Israeli press to refrain from passing judgement on the case before a verdict is reached, passed almost unnoticed in most of the Israeli newspapers.

The incitement campaign reached almost mass hysteria with the unsolved murder of female soldier Hadas Kedmi last December. On December second, just two days after Kedmi disappeared, *Ma'ariv* presumptuously wrote: "There is fear among the investigators that the female soldier Hadas Kedmi was kidnapped by terrorists [Palestinians]." The paper opened its article by saying the soldier "disappeared last Thursday, the closing day of the Palestinian National Council in Amman, and this causes concern to the police and the IDF... the fear is that Hadas disappeared on the basis of a hostile action, to mark this event."

Ma'ariv's article was just the tip of an intensive and unrestrained campaign against Palestinians which followed.

On December 7 *Davar* dug up an old myth of murder as a political initiation rite among Palestinians. "Is it possible that the people who want to join the terrorist organisations attempt to prove their ability in kidnapping and murder of soldiers and civilians from isolated areas?" The writer answers this question with the help of a "terror expert" as follows: "The kidnapping and the murder incidents, according to Dr Marari (director of the terror project in the Tel Aviv Strategic Studies Centre), were perpetrated by extremists who operate out of national motivation."

As the campaign continued, *Ma'ariv* returned to the theme of a fifth column: "A senior officer in the Israeli police said that if it finally emerges that Hadas Kedmi's vicious murder was committed by Israeli Arabs for nationalist motives, then the state will not be able to evade the fact that there is new situation which necessitates reconsideration of internal security by those responsible."

The *Ma'ariv* writer added, "The results of this investigation will greatly determine the future of relations between Arabs and Jews in the state." The writer then quoted a statement made a few months ago by former Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan to back his viewpoint. Eitan asserted that the PLO's prerequisite for Palestinians trying to join "terrorist organisations," was that they kill a Jew."

These accusations, and many others, are not based on fact but on prejudiced ideas and prevailing Israeli opinion about Palestinians. There has been no single case in which it was definitely established that an Arab killed a Jew in order to qualify for admittance to a Palestinian organisation. And in Kedmi's case, all this was written before the body was discovered a week later.

On December 12 *Hadashot* and *Al Hamishmar* reported that a "senior police source stated that the incident is connected with a criminal action, and not hostile terrorist action, as we thought in the beginning... especially when we take into account the fact that no terrorist organisation has claimed responsibility."

Despite the journalistic backtracking it is doubtful whether the impression created by the Israeli newspapers against Palestinians would be so easily erased from the minds of the Israeli public.

In conclusion, while relatively open as far as Israeli Jewish issues are concerned, the Israeli newspapers' handling of Palestinian issues is generally characterised by prejudice, ignorance and the tendency to pass baseless and hasty judgements. The shortcomings can be traced primarily to the fact that the Israeli press is inseparably intertwined with government policy and interests. Hence it is not surprising that the government policy of denial and discrimination is reflected in the pages of Hebrew dailies.

"The Israeli press rushes to fill its pages with condemnatory articles against the general Palestinian community in Israel, and warns against what is often called "unrestrained Arab nationalism." Terms such as "dangerous phenomenon," "time bomb," "the Israeli Arabs are becoming extreme and hostile to the state," often appear in Israeli papers.

The Verdict Is Guilty:

Hebrew Press Conducts "Trial by Headline"

The arrest of four Palestinians in connection with the Hadas Kedmi murder, although police admitted that their arrest did not mean a breakthrough in the investigation, made front page headlines in almost all the main Hebrew newspapers. The headlines indirectly accused the four Palestinians of involvement in the murder. The day after these stories appeared (see headlines, below), an Arab member of Knesset presented a motion in the Israeli parliament to discuss the issue of incitement and "slander" launched by the Israeli newspapers against the Palestinian population. He gave the Hadas Kedmi case as a recent example.

A: *Yediot Aharanot:* **Bold type, front page: "Four Young Beduin Suspected of Hadas Kedmi's Murder." Sub-head: "Senior Police Source: It Is Too Early To Determine If the Arrests Mark a Breakthrough."**

B: *Hadashot*: **Front Page: "Four Suspects Held in Connection with Hadas Kedmi's Murder." Sub-head: "Three of Them from Sbehi Family, Relatives to Those Accused of the Murder of Dani Katz and Dafna Karmoun."**

C: *HaAretz*: **Top, front page: "Four Beduin, Including a Soldier, Arrested As Suspects in the Murder of Hadas Kedmi." Sub-head: "Two Are Cousins, Who Live at the Approach to Isfiya. Three Other Family Relatives in Isfiya Were Charged with the Killing of Dafna Karmoun."**

D: *Al Hamishmar:* **"Four Suspected in Hadas Kedmi's Murder." Sub-head: "Their Car Is Also Suspected of Being Used in the Kidnapping."**

E: *The Jerusalem Post:* **Several days later three of the suspects were released for lack of evidence. The fourth man was remanded, "even though the judge acknowledged that there was no 'real evidence' against him but only 'fragments of information.' " Yet the *Post* page 3 headline announced January 13: "Kedmi Slaying Suspect Remanded Again." On January 14, he was released.**

The Trauma of Tawjihi

by Said al-Ghazali

Students taking the *tawjihi* exam in a West Bank classroom.

The 12,676 high school seniors who crammed for their first semester *tawjihi* exams last week brought an atmosphere of acute tension and criticism to West Bank schools and the community at large. The tension derives from the make-it-or-break-it importance given the exam, which is the sole criterion for admission to local universities and for many jobs. Only two-thirds of these students will pass the exam and successfully complete secondary school. For the rest — more than 4000 youngsters — the future is not bright.

The criticism stems from two sources. First, *tawjihi* is a test of rote memorisation, not aptitude, so its overall effectiveness as a teaching method and as a determinant of intelligence is questionable. Second, the *tawjihi* is designed by the Jordanian Ministry of Education to reflect Jordanian facilities and curriculum, but West Bank schools often lack the facilities available in Jordanian schools, particularly laboratories. Caught in a peculiar trap not unfamiliar to stateless West Bankers, students are unwitting victims of a political situation beyond their control.

History of the Exam

During the mandatory period, the British system of education was in force. At that time there was no division between art and science. This continued until 1959, when the British matriculation exam was cancelled by the Jordanians. In the 1960-61 academic year, students did not sit for the general exam because the Jordanian Ministry of Education was reviewing and overhauling it. In the 1961-62 year, a new educational system was finalised, students were classified into art and science streams and *tawjihi* was first administered as the secondary school matriculation exam.

From time to time since then the Jordanian Ministry of Education has introduced changes in the exam format.

In 1980 the Jordanian Ministry of Education introduced the two-phase *tawjihi*, split between the winter and spring semesters. This year students must earn 600 out of 1200 points to pass. Last year, a passing grade was 500 out of 1000.

The current exam is in eight subjects. Students must pass with pre-set minimum marks in three basic subjects (Arabic, English, religion) plus history for art students and math for science students. They must answer at least 40 percent correctly in at least two other subject tests. Two tests can be "passed" with a grade of between 25 and 40 percent, as long as they are not in a major subject.

One week after the start of the winter academic year, the education departments in Nablus, Tulkarm, Jenin, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron begin collecting information about students who will take the exam, preparing files, typing and distributing administrative orders and collecting exam fees from students. The Israeli education liaison officer meets with members of the general exams committee and gives them instructions on administering the *tawjihi*. The chairpersons of exams departments also meet and coordinate activities. They appoint proctors, correctors and heads of exams halls and provide them with the necessary instructions.

After grading exams, if results do not meet the minimum average, education officials curve results to raise the average after both first and second semester exams are completed. The increase added is based on the average of a random sample.

Mohammed Irwaished, director of the exams department in Bethlehem, told *Al Fajr* the percentage of those who pass *tawjihi* is usually around 56 percent. He denied that Jordanian officials skew the curve to aid only students in Jordan, a popular rumour in the West Bank.

Controversy

Since its initiation in West Bank schools in 1962, the *tawjihi* exam has reaped bitter complaints. Students criticise the low calibre of education the memorisation system reinforces. Some even perceive a hidden conspiracy against their generation and complain that they are systematically handicapped in all subjects. Why do most *tawjihi* graduates, even those who do well on the test, stumble in their higher studies, they ask. Their answer: because rote memorisation does not teach students how to write a research paper, or argue coherently, or draw conclusions — or even to think at all.

The *tawjihi* crisis is worsening and the number of its victims increases every year. Local universities cannot absorb more than 2000 new students annually; a few hundred privileged students can seek higher education in the United States or other countries. But the 8000 or more students who do poorly or fail are abandoned and remain dependent on their families for support.

During the past few years, students have begun to protest the poor exam scores. When the results of last year's English exam were published and it became apparent that only 37 percent passed, hundreds of students demonstrated in streets of Ramallah and tried to break into the local education department.

It is not only the *tawjihi* method which is responsible for students' poor showing. The education department, under the supervision of the Israeli military administration, is beset by problems. Qualified teachers are very scarce. Some students speculate how many of their teachers could pass the same exam.

An Arabic language teacher who has taught *tawjihi* students in Jerusalem schools for 26 years admitted that the student level is very low. He cited several factors behind students' feeble performance. In 1980, the exam was divided into two streams, sciences and arts, and the curriculum was also split accordingly. The division, charged the teacher — who declined to give his name — meant that science students, the track where better students are traditionally directed, had no knowledge of literature, history or geography, and art students had no basic training in math, physics or chemistry. At his school there are 200 art students and only 40 science students.

Another problem is that school teachers are notoriously underpaid. Teachers suffer from endless financial crises. "Is it possible to expect any more from the teacher who cannot even provide his family with basic necessities?" asked the teacher. Students supported a ten-week strike by government school teachers in 1980-81, even when *tawjihi* students had much to lose from the interruption of studies. Teachers were demanding a 100 percent salary increase.

He concluded: "I do not blame students if they break into exam halls or revolt against exams and teachers. They are victims of an educational system that needs to be completely redesigned."

Above all, students and teachers agree that the high state of anxiety students live under during *tawjihi* must be alleviated but, short of a total overhaul of the educational system, no one quite knows how. "What complicates the problem is the students' perception that the exam is his future arbitrator," remarked the Arabic teacher. At exam time, students' families exacerbate the strees. A woman from Ramallah repeatedly reminds her son: "Do not waste the efforts of 12 years... study hard and if you flunk the exam your father and I will have heart attacks."

The Hashemite Secondary School in Ramallah, one of many in the West Bank.

Passing the *tawjihi* has become a basic requirement even for maintaining respect within one's own family. Failing *tawjihi* is in fact perceived by teachers, schoolmates, parents and friends as a major failure in life. Students who fail the exam have a very difficult time finding any employment at all. The first question the employer poses to any job-seeker is, "Did you take the *tawjihi*? Did you pass it?" The relevance of *tawjihi* as a qualification for that particular job is beside the point. *Tawjihi* is given a halo of importance. It has become society's first measuring stick.

Students prepare for the exam years before actually taking it. This is reflected in teachers' commonly heard threats in preparatory years: "You will harvest your results in the *tawjihi*," they warn ominously.

Exhausted from intensive cramming of teachers' explanatory notes and costly private lessons, heads bursting with miscellaneous information, students sit for the Jordanian Education Ministry exam in two separate rounds at the end of the first and second semesters. When they arrive at the exam hall, students' nerves dissipate and the information they have worked so hard to absorb evaporates. Hearts thump and minds race in complete confusion during the exam. Reem, a student who flunked the exam last year, attempts once again to pass it this year. "I got scared. I live in terror this year. If I flunk the exam again, my parents and neighbours will call me a failure. When I saw the pink and green colours of the exam papers, I got terrified. Instead of writing my answers, I thought about my future..."

Reem said that exam proctors always insult students with abrupt outbursts like, "You are a donkey," "Do not speak" and "Do not turn your face." "The proctors keep announing that such and such time has passed. They scare me," she said.

Suhad, another student who was caught holding an extraneous piece of paper, had her exam confiscated for half an hour. She told *Al Fajr*: "I was optimistic before the exam but my hopes vanished in the hall. I felt that the proctor was a plicewoman. In the Arabic exam, I did not write the compositions or answer any art history questions."

The exam hall director and the proctors refuse to answer students' claims and only repeat that they were ordered not to speak to the press.

Leila, a student from the Ittihad Nisa'i School, told *Al Fajr*: "When I read the questions, I forgot everything and burst into tears. However, after a few stressful moments I recollected myself. *Tawjihi* determines university admission."

continued on page 15

Palestine and Culture

In Memoriam, Mu'in Bseiso

The Path Has Risen

by Mahmoud Darwish

Translation by Ibrahim Muhawi

How many deaths must you die?
In how many languages must you make mistakes
Before you arrive?
The path has risen against the path
And our steps have taken many directions.
The hero's dead,
Long live the mountain!
How many times, for your sake and mine,
Must you raise two tents on the shores?
How often must you come into the kingdom of violets,
Only to find no violets there?
Do not use my eyes to cry, but lift me
So I may carry the weapons of the dream
Stained with a blood that calls our name
And leads us — I don't know where.
No. We have not found a river to take
Save this one. Let's go with it then.
Cities appear, and disappear in us,
While from our hand to our blood —
A horizon that cannot be fenced in
Except with the boxthorn of childhood.
How much have we seen? How often
In the four winds have we seen
Cities approach, in which we disappear,
Only to emerge like hostages when hope betrays us?
The hero's dead,
Long live the mountain!

We walk, to go on walking
Is it the right of the anthem over the martyr
To break the knife in his blood, abandon him to rusting iron,
And let his path stretch in him till the end?
What is the end?
This is the taste of the land:
We know it and touch it and hear it,
And raise it like a banner
You say to me, "Nothing is clearer than the blood
Aimed in the direction of the clearly-seen land."
And you speak; and say to me. And I say to you,
"How beautiful you are!"
This — all your clarity — is a pyramid in front of me.
Gaza watches over the wounding seas.
Nothing unites us save that which casts
Two hearts in one body. And nothing,
Nothing tears us apart
Except the heart
Equally divided in our two breasts. And nothing,
Nothing draws us to a nearby Andalusia
Save this path. Let's take it together then,
My friend, you, the silken beast,
To the beginning. What is the beginning?
This is the taste of the land. This,
Its bloody discus, in your hand has turned to flame.
The hero's dead,
Long live the mountain!

We walk, to go on walking.
Why did you not tell me all about the grapes?
A country came, and a country went.
A country will come, then will go.
What song will raise a temple collapsing in on us?
Rise up, and protect your heart from your hands,
From my butterflies, and the sound of the ship
As it sails with us away from the harbour.
How many seas must we sail? And, behind you,
How many cities will toss their lilies to the occupier?
How many skies will we roof over with poems?
What's not yours, is not yours.
We walk, to go on walking; then we walk again.
Whatever you find, you find,
But it's not yours. And yet
You must soar over the balconies of your wound
In order to see what you're not seeing.
Describe your evening, for me to see my heart
So I can send it to you. Describe
The particles of the waves so that I may rest
From the disease of contemplating the water.
Describe for me our ancient stones so I can believe
There are pheasant in this world.
The hero's dead,
Long live the mountain!

How often must we die around death?
How many a moon will sap our strength and then leave?
Here we are:
Sucking life one minute, and one minute around the corpses,
And postponing the last bell.
You must stay alive to write my elegy
And raise me high like a star.
And you must stay alive to go on living.
How many a loaf and its sound did we share?
In vain, in vain!
No choice but an ambulance, and a flag to cover
One of us. Who then, who
Will be able to say farewell to his other
And bear him over the shoulder —
A river in a death-shroud?
We were searching, my friend,
In the streets, my friend, for a homeland.
We were searching for the places of our exile
And a wind for our high anthem.
But now, I'm searching for a tomb.
Then look to the desert around you
Wide is the desert folding in on us.
And did you find Egypt, and it found you not?
But Egypt, in all of us when we fall in love,
Will grant you one metre of its plentiful sands
She will give you the last of all kisses.
The hero's dead,
Long live the mountain!

How many times shall we say what we've said,
"Samarkand, farewell forever!"
A past has passed from its land,
And destroyed me.
*Saffron did you in. **
The spirit has a history,
But time has its place, and longing a country.
We said to all the beautiful women,
"Hey, fall in love with both of us!
Yet don't love us, we're leaving."
What's the name of the one you loved in India?
What's the name of my lover in Cordova
What's the name of those Asian eyes?
What's the name of my last widow in Damascus?
What shall we call your breakdown near Rome?
And the throes of my death around Babylon?
In vain we love, if we love Andalusia,
In vain we love!
For how shall we remove this rubble from us
So we can sing?
Sing to the similarity of two narcissus flowers in one stone!
Let's break it then, and move on.
Fear not the dream will fall apart.
Be victorious ahead of me,
But don't leave me on my own
A hostage to the slowly fading image of things.
The hero's dead,
Long live the mountain!

We walk, to go on walking.
And what if we were to find the last rose of the spirit?
Will you say to me, "Our day of judgment has come,
And we've offered sacrifices to the god."
Who, in you and me, are these words searching for?
Who?
Who is the guitar player searching for
If day should fade, with no echo but the echo?
In vain do we return the feathers to the dove
And beauty back to the mirage.
And in vain will the waves whiten our astonishment!
I will break everything around me, and will expose
The history of words from the time of magic and religion
Until even the insane one among us
Has taught what he does not know.
Count the minutes. Count them, and you will find
The question about the question still the same.
You'll find departure still to be departure
And every woman a station.
Space has landed in our hands,
Without our finding space or our hands.
Who in us are these words searching for?
Say what you have to say, and go away!
Our day of judgment has come, but we've not risen.
On our blood nations have risen.
The hero's dead,
Long live the mountain!

How many deaths will you die
So that rings will find your fingers?
How many times will you have to die,
To find that life is but two minutes of wine.
In the world collapsing around you
You have no right to a dialogue with spring
So it may follow you.
In the world collapsing around you
They demanded you celebrate your death with a poem
Describing the extraordinary embrace
Between the victim and the gun.
In the world collapsing around you
They demanded you hang your corpse
A bell over the ruins, calling to prayer
*Abu Lahab and the woman carrying wood. ***
In the world collapsing around you
They demanded you applaud bitterness and gold.
And yet you must rise above yourself and pledge
Allegiance to those who will sell you for a speech.
And you must find the answer to the easy question,
*"Did the Prophet ever doubt A'isha?" ****
In the world collapsing around you
Did you ever see anything but speeches?
In the world collapsing around you
They demanded you see the honeycomb.
The hero's dead,
Long live the mountain!

Published simultaneously in *Al Yom Assabeh* (October 29, 1984) and in *Al Karmel*, the Palestinian literary quarterly edited by the poet.

Mu'in Bseiso was a major Palestinian poet who was born in Gaza and who lived in Egypt for many years (where he was imprisoned), in Europe and in Lebanon. He died in London and was buried in exile. See *Al Fajr* July 1, 1983, for an interview with him, and February 1, 1984, for a report on his death.

The poem consists of seven 14-line sonnets, each with its own complex rhyme scheme, which is sometimes consistent from one sonnet to another and sometimes not. In the translation I attempted to incorporate the multiple layers of meaning in the poem, paying very close attention to its tone.

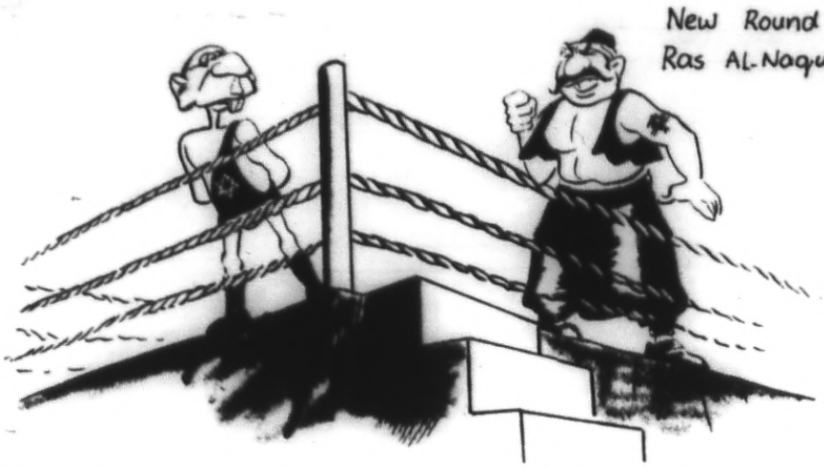
Like all the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, this poem takes for its theme the meaning of Palestinian experience, placing it in a universal and human context — translator's note.

* The "saffron" reference is obscure. My guess is that it connotes treachery, and is a reference to the poisoned golden robe which killed the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays. It was sent him as a gesture of honour by the Emperor Justinian from Constantinople, after the poet had sought his assistance in avenging his father.

** Abu Lahab was half-brother to the Prophet's father (ie, the Prophet's uncle), and the woman carrying wood was his wife. Unlike all the other relatives of the Prophet, they never embraced Islam. In fact it is said they went out of their way to be rude to the Prophet and to torment him. Sura CXI in the Qur'an, which is very short but devoted entirely to them, turns them into archetypal non-believers.

*** A'isha was the third and favourite wife of the Prophet. She was married while still very young, and is thought to have possessed great beauty. Gossip concerning her fidelity grew out of an incident when she was accidentally left behind during a rest stop on a trip, and then was brought back to Medina by a young man who had found her by herself. See Qur'an XXIV, 11ff. The "question" of course is not at all easy to answer. The poet uses it to typify the situation of the Palestinians: they have no choice but to answer this question, yet whether they answer it "yes" or "no" they are in deep trouble.

WINDOW ON THE ARAB PRESS



The discovery of a local ring producing counterfeit medicine, the Taba talks and events in Lebanon were the main stories covered this week in the local press.

Front page headlines were given to the arrest of a Palestinian-Israeli group that was producing and marketing counterfeit pediatric medicines.

The Egyptian-Israeli-American talks over the fate of the disputed Taba resort started this week. Local papers covered the talks with photos, news and editorials.

The escalated Lebanese resistance attacks on Israeli targets, as the preparations for withdrawal began, were also prominently reported.

Let The Dialogue Start Again

The growing signs of an imminent dialogue between the *Fatah Central Committee and* the Democratic Alliance are a source of relief for all those who care for unity and the position and role of the PLO.

It is natural that the dialogue, if serious, should start from the point at which it left off, devote time to the Aden-Algiers accord and determine a common stand toward new developments.

In this context, King Hussein's initiative should be rejected in accordance with the Aden-Algiers accord. We say this so that it may not be misunderstood that there are individuals who want to dictate conditions. What is required is the implementation of what was agreed upon.

Therefore we may say that those who supported the Aden-Algiers agreement and are now calling for the formation of a broad front together with forces that oppose this agreement, and those who supported the agreement and are now calling for abandoning it in favour of Amman PNC resolutions, are not starting from a responsible position toward dealing with the division.

The Aden-Algiers accord should be the only basis for dialogue. The success of the dialogue depends upon the extent to which this accord is followed.

AL TALIA
January 24

The Will For Dialogue

The PLO Executive Committee is continuing meetings in Tunis to take further steps to face the rapidly changing political situation.

Those who oppose these new steps are betting against the PLO and the Palestinian people. Salah Khalaf revealed some of the bets when he made known the Syrian and Libyan plan to send assassination squads to Tunis to murder Yasir Arafat.

News reports also revealed that Habash supports an alternative PLO, thus contradicting the minimum of the possibility to resume national dialogue. Unfortunately, this stand conforms to the Syrian-Libyan stand against Palestinian legitimacy.

Despite these contradictions, the PLO Executive Committee under the leadership of Yasir Arafat continues to enhance national dialogue to bridge the gap among all Palestinian factions. We are sure all the Palestinian factions will respond to this dialogue under the PLO.

AL FAJR
January 25

Limited Options

President Hafez al-Assad thought he could contain the PLO and put it, as a winning card, in his pocket. But he came to loggerheads with the Palestinian leadership and matters reached the present state of affairs.

Following the disagreement with Assad, the PLO strengthened its relations with Jordan, especially after their departure from Lebanon. Since putting all the Palestinian eggs in one basket is dangerous, the PLO also deepened its reapproachment with Egypt. But Egypt is not willing to go too far with the PLO. Egypt seems unable to offer the PLO more than its best wishes and pinning its hopes on Washington.

Washington, under Reagan or anyone else, is not interested in the PLO which it seeks either to destroy altogether or to reduce to such a size that it poses no threat.

The rest of the Arab world is so immersed in its regional problems that the Palestinian cause has become the thing that least interests it.

As for the Palestinian arena, which is the origin and the essence, it is no longer united for one reason or another. The Palestinians under occupation are vulnerable to all kinds of pressures.

So, in order not to deceive ourselves, we should admit that we are in an unenviable situation. We have to face the plight imposed upon us. Nothing is easier than saying that national unity and the escalation of the Palestinian struggle are the solutions. But how can we do this when all doors are locked and options so limited? Yet, can we talk about other options?

We should start with seeking ways to resume Palestinian dialogue, rather than further division and fragmentation, through the so-called "Broad Front" which some Palestinians are talking about.

AL FAJR
January 26

The American Position

The US reiterated its refusal of the idea of an international peace conference. This refusal was coupled with increasing US aid to Israel. It also coincided with the approaching season of official Arab pilgrimages to Washington. It is as if the American administration were renewing its message to the Arab regimes: This is all we have — you have no choice but to submit unconditionally and without making a big fuss about it.

We do not think that the US-Soviet agreement to hold talks on the region's crisis should raise any hopes or illusions that Washington may change its position. The Soviet influence, though weighty, is in need of a unified and clear Arab stand.

Escalation of the anti-Arab American position should motivate sincere Arab nationalists to draw conclusions and to close ranks in the face of this American onslaught.

AL SHA'AB
January 28

National Unity

National unity is not a slogan to be raised by one party or the other. It is definitely a practice and application used by existing legitimate institutions and within a legitimate national framework. At this critical stage this "game" cannot go on, especially after the path has been made very clear by the 17th PNC session in Amman. Either we have more and more Palestinian cohesion through national dialogue, or we go out of the PLO and join other fronts dominated by certain Arab regimes, such as the broad front.

Since we still believe that national dialogue is capable of enhancing national unity, we ask for deepening that dialogue so that we may achieve this end.

AL FAJR
January 29

The UN Security Council Role

King Hussein's call to the UN Security Council to perform its role in solving the Palestinian problem comes at a time when peace efforts are paralysed.

The Security Council has not dealt fully with the Palestinian problem since 1973, on the assumption that the US is settling the problem. Even if the US has 99 percent of the cards, this does not mean that the Security Council is exempt from doing its job and following up on the Palestinian cause to its end.

The council is supposed to give each of its members a chance to play an independent role. Are the other member countries — 14 of them — satisfied with the present stalemate? Or are they incapable of doing anything in the face of US insistence on aborting every effort not instigated by it?

The Arab countries are required to intensify their efforts with Western Europe, the USSR and China, which are permanent members in the Security Council, to convince them to initiate a move, with or without the US, to revive the peace efforts.

AL QUDS
January 29

Bethlehem Merchants Protest City's New Market Tax

Bethlehem merchants and vegetable vendors presented a signed memorandum to the Bethlehem municipality January 29 demanding the cancellation of newly imposed taxes. Bethlehem municipality sources said that the new regulations were based on Jordanian law and in force in other West Bank towns. Merchants and vegetable vendors complained of the heavy taxes and termed them "arbitrary and unbearable taxes."

The new regulations force wholesale and retail merchants who use the new agricultural market to pay a four percent sales tax. Rental fees for the vegetable stands will be also collected at a rate of JD60 per metre. Shopkeepers' total tax this year ranges from JD300 to 1000.

Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij told *Al Fajr* the decision to collect the four percent tax on goods is not new. "It is practised in markets of Ramallah, Nablus, Hebron and Jericho. We also tax merchants in accordance with their capital and the profits they make."

Nazareth

Continued from page 3.

for benefits." He cited recent school graduates and welfare recipients as examples.

Safwan Fahoum, a Nazareth municipality employee told *Al Fajr* that the reasons behind the economic hardship in his city are politically related. He said the Israeli government chooses to ignore or even discriminate against Nazareth because it is an Arab city and is led by a left-wing municipality. "Nazareth lacks most government projects and financial aid other Israeli cities receive. While Israeli cities around Nazareth are economically booming, Nazareth is sliding into a deep recession," he said.

Fahoum said the march was held to "demand equality" with other cities and to reject "racist discrimination." He said that although Israel as a whole is going through economic hardship, Nazareth is affected the most. "We demand that the government encourage public and private investment in our city as a partial solution to our problem."

As for a long-term solution, Suhail Diab suggested that the Israeli government "relocate money from the defence budget towards better economic planning and start treating our city as equal to other cities."

Israeli Knesset Abolish Arab Affairs Advisor

The Israeli Knesset debated January 29 the recent abolition of the post of prime minister's advisor on Arab affairs and regional offices for Arab affairs.

The office of the advisor on Arab affairs has long treated Israeli Arabs as a potentially hostile ethnic minority that demanded separate treatment, funds and policies from the Jewish population. It was made responsible for Islamic *waqf* property, government Arabic language media and social programmes and was the only government authority to which Arabs could address queries, complaints and requests. The system served to selectively isolate the Arab community from the Israeli Jewish society and to institutionalise prejudice and discrimination against Arabs, according to Arab MKs.

The new plan was drawn up by Israeli Minister Without Portfolio Ezer Weizman, who announced that Arabs will now go through the same government channels as Israeli Jews in submitting requests for funds and services. The responsibilities of the post will be distributed to committees within various ministries. According to Weizman, the objective of the changes is "to give Arab citizens the same rights as those enjoyed by Jews."

Binyamin Gur-Aryeh, the man who served in the post under the past Likud government, was recently fired in accordance with these changes. He has taken the government to court over the issue of his dismissal.

Arab Knesset members strongly supported the change but expressed reservations that the change will only be a superficial title change, not a basic change in general government policy and attitude.

Tawfiq Zayyad, mayor of Nazareth and MK from the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, explained during the debate that the disputed post had in the past acted as a barrier to the Arab community's development and modernisation. He noted: "The budgets allocated to the Arab communities comprise only 20-30 percent of Jewish community budgets, some even less than 10 percent." Because the post existed, "the various other ministries did not have to allocate funds to Arabs," he said.

In the debate, Zayyad added that Israeli governments have treated Israeli Arabs as "temporary guests rather than full-fledged citizens." This has caused much anxiety among Arabs and helped create such racist phenomena as "Kahanism," he said.

MK Mohammed Mi'ari (PLP) termed ex-advisor on Arab affairs Gur-Aryeh "a symbol of the ugliness of government policy. His approach was characterised by toughness and violence."

Likud and religious members of Knesset strongly opposed cancelling the office for fear of giving momentum to the Palestinian nationalist movement. They openly expressed fear that the inter-ministerial committees which would replace the advisor's position could be "too advantageous" to Arabs. They could lead to "the crystallisation of an Arab nationalist consciousness," according to MK Avner Shaki (NRP).

Outside the Knesset Mansour Kardoush, one of the founders of *Al Ard* movement in the 1960's, a Palestinian nationalist movement which was later banned, told *Al Fajr* that "the result is the same whether the post stays or is abolished." Kardoush felt that the publicity given to the abolition of the post was exaggerated.

February 1 – 1:00-3:00

Demonstration: *Women Against Occupation* will meet at *Neve Tertza* prison for women, outside Ramleh, to protest revoking of prisoners' privileges there.

February 2 – 8:30 p.m.

Concert: *Guitar Duo* by Dowland Sor, Duarte Granados, at the Redeemer Church, Jerusalem, Old City. Tel: 282-543.

At the Nuzha/el-Hakawati Theatre, East Jerusalem. Tel: 288-189

February 1,5 – 9:00 p.m.

Tourist Show: *"1000 and One Night for You."* El-Hakawati presents a new folklore music programme for friends and visitors of Jerusalem. $US9.

February 1 – 6:00 p.m.

Film: *"Hanna K."* produced by Costa Gavras and starring Jill Clayburgh and Mohammed Bakri.

February 7 – 7:00, 8:30 p.m.

Films: *Nazareth '84*, a documentary film about the Voluntary Work Camp in Nazareth. 7:00 p.m. (Arabic).
Story of a City on the Shore, a locally produced documentary about Jaffa from the British Mandate until the present. 8:30 p.m.

February 8 – 10:00 a.m.

Seminar: *Discussion of Prison Literature*, sponsored by the Palestinian Writers' Union, at the Federation of Unions, Beit Hanina. (Arabic)

Beyond the Walls **is available in the United States from "Domestic Distribution," a subsidiary of Warner Brothers, at the following address. The movie is opening in New York in mid-February:**

"Domestic Distribution"
Attn: David Friedman
Warner Brothers, Burbank Studios
Los Angeles, CA
USA

Tel: (818) 954-6000

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WEEKLY REVIEW

January 23, 1985

TAWJIHI STUDENTS DETAINED

NABLUS — Israeli authorities detained several Nablus students and prevented them from sitting for the *tawjihi* (matriculation) exams, which ended this week.

BIG BOMB IN NABLUS

NABLUS — Israeli sappers dismantled a large bomb found at 10:00 am in Jamal Abd al-Nasser Street, the main street of Nablus.

ANERA DONATES TO BEIT JALA

BEIT JALA — The American organisation ANERA donated US$10,000 towards renovating the industrial area in Beit Jala.

NAJAH, ARIZONA U. TWINNED

NABLUS — A twinning agreement was signed between Najah University in Nablus and the University of Arizona in the United States.

The agreement centres on cooperation between the two universities in the fields of agriculture, English language, civil engineering and lecture exchange.

GALILEAN DETAINED FOR GRAFITTI

Israeli authorities detained Arafat Sufian, 19, from the Galilee village of Mashhad, on suspicion of writing the letters PLO on a wall of one of the houses in the Yissod Hama'aliyah settlement.

Sufian is also suspected of sending threat letters to Israeli settlers. He was released on bail pending trial.

NAZARETH LAWYER BARRED FROM WEST BANK

NAZARETH — Lawyer Aziz Shehadeh of Nazareth was notified by the Israeli authorities that he will not be allowed to enter the West Bank and Gaza Strip for one year. Shehadeh has sent a protest to Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

BEIT SIRA RESIDENT JAILED

RAMALLAH — Israeli military court in Ramallah sentenced Daoud Abu Safiyeh, from the village of Beit Sira in the Ramallah district, to three months in prison, 21 months suspended and a IS2 million fine on charges of membership in a Palestinian organisation and weapons training.

January 24, 1985

2000 DUNUMS CONFISCATED

HEBRON — Israeli military authorities notified the *mukhtars* of the village of Samu' in the Hebron district of their decision to expropriate 2000 dunums from village lands.

The lands are owned by the clans of Hawamreh and Daghamin from Samu', and Zuhur and Buheitat from the nearby village of Yatta.

DHEISHEH MOVEMENT RESTORED

BETHLEHEM — Israeli troops lifted a two-day curfew imposed on Dheisheh camp after a petrol bomb was thrown at an Israeli Egged bus.

JAILED FOR STABBING SOLDIER

GAZA — Israeli military court in Gaza sentenced Bassam Ibrahim Ahmad Qadourah, 21, of Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza district to nine months in prison on charges of stabbing an Israeli soldier.

HOUSE DEMOLISHED

BETHLEHEM — Israeli authorities demolished the home of Samih Mohammed Awad Hamamreh in the village of Husan in the Bethlehem district on the pretext that the house was illegally constructed.

The house consisted of two rooms and a garage. Hamamreh is a construction worker.

January 25, 1985

HOUSE DESTROYED

JAB'A — Israeli authorities demolished the home of Ibrahim Hussein Khader Abu Latifeh in the village of Jab'a near Bethlehem.

The four-room house, built only last year, was destroyed on the pretext that it was too close to the main road. Abu Latifeh has a wife and four children.

January 27, 1985

PLOUGHSHARES INTO SWORDS

Israeli bulldozers destroyed 800 dunums of cultivated land in the Galilee villages of Sakhnin and Arrabeh. An Israeli spokesperson claimed the land is needed for "military manoeuvres." But the Arab owners strongly rejected this claim.

EGYPTIAN AID FOR CANADA CAMP

Egypt has agreed to grant a US$7000 compensation to each of the 516 families living in Canada refugee camp in the Gaza district to assist their resettlement.

The Israeli government agreed to allow the refugees to return to the Gaza Strip, but insists that they be resettled elsewhere. The refugees are demanding to live with their families and not be dispersed in other camps.

ISRAELI BUS STONED

SARFIN — An Israeli bus on its way from the Emmanuel settlement in Nablus to Qalqilya was pelted with stones near the village of Sarfin in the Qalqilya district, Israel Radio reported.

The bus driver said he had heard gun shots, but police found no evidence to substantiate this claim.

FIRE BOMB

JENIN — A fire bomb was thrown at the Israeli military headquarters in Jenin, Israel TV reported. According to the report, the bomb hit the wall of the building and exploded without causing any casualties or damages.

2 YOUTHS JAILED

MUGHIYAR — The Ramallah military court sentenced Atef Na'san and Sharif Na'san, both from the village of Mughiyar in the Ramallah district, to nine months in prison and three months suspended on charges of entering an Israeli army camp near their village.

YOUTH JAILED FOR MEMBERSHIP

NAHALIN — An Israeli military court in Ramallah sentenced Hassan Isma'il of the village of Nahalin in the Bethlehem district to two years in prison and two years suspended on charges of membership in a Palestinian organisation and possession of weapons.

UNIVERSITY DELEGATION TO CAIRO

GAZA — An academic delegation from the Islamic University in Gaza went to Egypt to discuss the admission of Palestinian students to Egyptian colleges and universities.

SENTENCED FOR MOURNING

HEBRON — An Israeli miltiary court in Nablus sentenced Fadel Isma'il Samuh and Azzam Jibril Dandis, both from Hebron, to one month in prison, four months suspended and a IS100,000 fine each on charges of participating in the symbolic funeral held for the late Fahd Qawasmeh in Hebron earlier this month.

January 28, 1985

BOMBS IN BETHLEHEM

BETHLEHEM — Israeli bomb sappers exploded two bombs found in the Wadi Ma'ali area in the centre of Bethlehem. No casualties or damages were reported.

CITRUS SEIZED

JERICHO — Israeli customs authorities have confiscated a truck carrying citrus for merchant Said Mohammed Jadallah of Bethlehem on the pretext that his permit had expired five minutes before the truck was stopped.

The citrus had an estimated value of IS800,000.

JAILED FOR AID

DURA — Israeli military court sentenced Mahmoud Ahmad Jaber al-Rajoub of Dura in the Hebron district to three months in prison, 33 months suspended and a IS3 million fine on charges of membership in an illegal organisation and aiding a wanted person, Ali Rabai.

HALHOUL STONES BUS

HEBRON — Three Israeli settlers were slightly injured when an Egged bus travelling from Jerusalem to Kiryat Arba was hit with stones near the village of Halhoul in the Hebron district last night.

Israel Radio said some of the settlers opened fire at the stone-throwers but did not say if there were any casualties. Israeli troops sealed off the area and began a search.

Residents of Kalandia and Am'ari refugee camps staged a sit-in strike at UNRWA headquarters in Sheikh Jarrah protesting ration cuts./AO photo

KALANDIA PROTESTS UNRWA CUTS

JERUSALEM — Dozens of families from Kalandia camp to the north of Jerusalem staged a sit-in at UNRWA offices in Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem in protest of measures taken recently by the agency to halt its supplies to refugees.

The protesters remained for several hours. The UNRWA director refused to receive their delegation, contrary to a previous promise to do so.

FISHERMEN STOPPED

GAZA — Fishermen in Gaza complained that Israeli warships have been harassing them recently and confiscating their nets although they were fishing in permitted areas.

25 WORKERS DETAINED

ASHDOD — Twenty-five youths

from Gaza who work in Ashdod were detained by police following an explosion in a gas pipe in a building.

Israel Radio said no one was injured in the explosion but the windows of several buildings were smashed.

RESIDENTS JAILED, FINED

GAZA — An Israeli military court in Gaza sentenced a resident of Jabalya camp, Ahmad Zaki Musleh, to eight years in prison on charges of producing and possessing explosives and membership in an illegal organisation. Amer Ibrahim Nasser, 21, of the village of Beit Hanoun was sentenced to three months in prison, a IS200,000 fine and two years suspended sentence on charges of distributing leaflets, inciting and membership in a youth committee.

The court also sentenced Fathi Taha, 37, from the same village to three months in prison, two years suspended and a IS150,000 fine; and Ali al-Abed al-Hadi, 35, of Gaza to IS150,000 and three months in prison.

January 29, 1985

GALILEE VILLAGES CALL FOR STRIKE

GALILEE — Three local councils of the Galilee villages of Arrabeh, Deir Hanna and Sakhnin have called a general strike in the villages to protest the Israeli demolition of their agricultural produce.

Hundreds of olive trees were destroyed in the operation, which covered some 800 dunums of land.

8 YEARS FOR MOLOTOV

JABLAYA — A Gaza military court sentenced Ahmad Zaki Musleh, 17, of Jabalya camp in the Gaza Strip to eight years in prison on charges of throwing Molotov cocktails at Israeli patrols and for membership in a Palestinian organisation.

PETROL BOMB IN NABLUS

NABLUS — A petrol bomb was lobbed at an Israeli army patrol on Faisal Street in Nablus. Israeli troops threw a cordon around the area and began searching for the attackers. Several residents were summoned to military headquarters for questioning and were released at 2:00 am.

DEBATE

BIR ZEIT — The educational committee of the Bir Zeit Student Council sponsored a debate on "Politics and Academic Life in the Universities."

Those participating in the debate were Dr Sari Nusseibeh, Dr Ali al-Jarbawi, Dr Tamer al-Issawi and Albert Aghazarian.

NEW IMAM FOR DHEISHEH

DHEISHEH — Sheikh Mohammed Ilayan Abu Laban has been appointed Imam of the Dheisheh refugee camp mosque.

STUDENT JAILED

NABLUS — The Israeli military court of Nablus sentenced student and Nablus resident Zaher Yousef Jawdeh to three months in prison and six months suspended on charges of throwing stones at Israeli vehicles.

JAILED FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Israeli military court in Ramallah sentenced Shawkat Ahmad Mohammed al-Nawaba from the village of Yatta in the Hebron district to two years in prison and two years suspended on charges of membership in an illegal organisation.

JAILED FOR WEAPONS

SA'IR — Two youths from the village of Sa'ir in the Hebron district, Hassan Yaqoub al-Jabarin and Jamil Ahmad Bassem Jaradat, were sentenced by the Israeli military court in Ramallah to three months in prison and nine months suspended on charges of possessing weapons and ammunition.

Mayor of Beer Sheba Eliahu HaNevy (left) greets a member of the Egyptian delegation at a dinner he hosted for the Israeli, Egyptian and American delegations to the Taba talks this week.

JAILED FOR INCITEMENT

AL MUGHIYAR — The Israeli military court in Ramallah sentenced four youths from the village of al-Mughiyar in the Ramallah district to various prison terms. Rafiq Mohammed Abu Ilaya ws sentenced to three years in prison and two years suspended; Ali Attallah Mohammed Abu Ilaya to two years in prison and two years suspended; Omar Ali Abu Ilaya and Bashir Mousa al-Haj were each sentenced to 10 months in prison and 10 months suspended.

The four were charged with possession of weapons and inciting in Ramallah.

prison on charges of throwing

CAMPS STRIKE

JERUSALEM — Residents of Kalandia, Am'ari, Jalazon and Dheisheh camps will stage a one-day sit-in at the UNRWA offices in Jerusalem. They plan to submit demands asking for resumption of UNRWA rations for hundreds of needy families. The rations were stopped because of budget cuts.

ISRAELI VEHICLES STONED

WEST BANK — Israel Radio reported that an Israeli bus was stoned near Jericho but there were no injuries. In another incident, a settler's car was stoned near Jifna village. The driver fired three shots at Arab youths. In a third incident an Israeli military vehicle was stoned near the new al-Bireh school. An Israeli patrol sealed off the area.

MAYOR MEETS AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION

BEIT JALA — The Mayor of Beit Jala, Farah al-A'araj, received a visiting Australian parliamentary delegation. He briefed the 12-man group on recent developments in the region and the conditions of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

MINOR JAILED, FINED FOR STONES

KALANDIA — Mujahed Nimr Ahmad Nabhan, a 15-year-old boy from Kalandia refugee camp, was sentenced by a Nablus military court to one month in prison, three years suspended and a IS70,000 fine on charges of throwing stones at Israeli vehicles.

FLAG FLIES IN NABLUS

NABLUS — Unidentified persons hoisted a Palestinian flag on the Arab Bank building in the centre of Nablus. Israeli soldiers surrounded the area and had the flag removed.

Tawjihi

continued from page 10

Reem, Suhad and Leila did not even want to speculate about their future plans. "When the results appear, then we will plan," they said.

The principal of Mamounieh School, Jamil Abu To'meh, told *Al Fajr* the reputation of the *tawjihi* is as an experience which destroys students' nerves and said the notorious harassment of proctors aggravates the crisis. Students need a smile and a kind word at this time of year.

But psychiatrist Mustafa Mujahed told *Al Fajr* that the *tawjihi* exam arouses great anxiety among students because of the negative reinforcements from their families and teachers and because of the great importance attributed to the exam. If the student has a weak personality, his stress will produce negative results and if he has a strong character, the stress will produce positive results. Often students' parents play a negative role when they keep urging their child to study more to get high marks. Mujahed added that he examined five students who have nothing wrong but they came to his clinic because their fathers continually pressure them to get high marks. Mujahed advises teachers, parents and educational directors to help them understand the atmosphere the student must endure at *tawjihi* time.

Favourable Views

A paragraph in the 10-page-long instructions distributed among exam hall directors states that the aim of the exam is to give students the marks they deserve. Based on exams results, the instructions say, students will be accepted at universities and community colleges or at various places of employment.

Mohammed Irwaished told *Al Fajr* that exams are the criteria of judgement. "Those students who pass the exam and meet the requirements of the university can study at the university." He said the exam is a necessity in the society as a "filter," since Arab and local universities cannot absorb all students. He also defended the use of strict disciplinary measures at exam halls. "We are currently experiencing student revolts in the exam halls. But we want to uphold the reputation of the *tawjihi* certificate and maintain the level of secondary school education. We therefore use strict measures against all kinds of cheating."

Criticism

Students, however, remain unconvinced. The test's emphasis on memorisation and its power to make or break their futures are subjects of hot debate.

A Palestinian student who studied in Canada told *Al Fajr* that the exam should be revised in accordance with international standards. "It should be equated with less anxiety and mental stress and its results should be cumulative with the work of previous years." As an alternative, he suggested something on the order of the American "Scholastic Aptitude Test" (SAT), which is not the only requirement for the university acceptance, be adopted.

Lately, students have begun expressing discontent in increasingly rebellious ways. Last year, some students' supporters in Hebron, Ramallah and Jericho used microphones from outside the exam halls to announce the answers to questions. Students even attacked two or three proctors with knives upon leaving the hall. Teachers are also divided. Some believe that the exam is a necessity because it is the only criterion of judgement and there is no other alternative. Others admit that *tawjihi* is not a good system because it relies solely on memorisation.

Some employees in the education department were critical of the classification into art and science streams. They said that the curriculum is fragmented and the overall level of cultural awareness among students is diminishing. They also criticised the new semester system and said it does not suit local social and economic conditions. There are not enough facilities like laboratories and libraries. Students cannot study well in the first semester because the lack of central heating makes only one room usable for the whole family — circumstances which are not exactly conducive to study.

In spite of these criticisms that resurface every year, there is no change, and students and teachers only receive echoes for their remarks. The radical change they demand is not simply a bureaucratic list of orders but rather a thorough restructuring, including a new curriculum, higher teacher qualifications, new essential facilities and the introduction of a comprehensive preparation for the *tawjihi* exam.

The annual Christmas cleaning in Bethlehem ended up violently this year when a priestly brawl erupted over cleaning rights. Daoud Kuttab explains why there is more to the dispute than meets the eye and why intra-denominational disputes in the Holy Land have assumed a distinctly unholy character.

The Right to Clean

Around 11:00 am, December 27, 1984, a number of priests gathered inside the Church of the Nativity to clean their respective areas of the Bethlehem church. A seemingly innocuous task was, in fact, fraught with tension: clergy from the Armenian and Greek Orthodox communities feared there might be a physical clash over the right to clean a controversial section in the church.

Armenians, led by Bishop Gerough Kapipian and his students, stood in the small Armenian chapel in the northern transept of the basilica. Nearby, Greek Orthodox Archimandrite Timothy Margaritis, accompanied by a procession of priests, began to clean areas that are agreed on, by tradition, to be Greek Orthodox property. Upstairs in the Greek convent, Greek Orthodox Patriarch Kerelos Theodorus I was anxiously awaiting results of the territorial contest. (The Armenians claim he instigated all the action; the Greeks say his presence was meant to cool tempers.)

Under the command of Father Timothy, a Greek Orthodox priest climbed up a carefully prepositioned ladder and started to clean the beams overlooking the tiny Armenian chapel. As the priest moved further and further along the beam, the Armenian Bishop, Kapipian, protested that he had gone far enough and warned him against proceeding farther. The Greek priest blithely ignored the warning and kept cleaning. The Armenian bishop grabbed a broomstick and positioned himself under the Greek priest hanging on the beam. Within seconds Greek Father Timothy hit the Armenian bishop with his satchel, claiming that he intended to knock the priest off the beam. Seeing their bishop attacked, the Armenians jumped on Archimandrite Timothy, brought him to the ground and started beating and kicking him in the face and shins. The attack quickly spread and within minutes both sides were involved in an all-out brawl, with priests using broomsticks and fists. The fight lasted only as long as it took the Israeli military governor to call in the border police and order the clergy on both sides to stop cleaning and fighting.

This Christmas season fight was the largest of the past few years, but it certainly represents nothing new or unique. Battles over cleaning rights in holy places shared by many denominations are as old as the places themselves. History books show that many fights, including some which have resulted in violent deaths, have occurred at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of Gethsemane in Jerusalem.

The significance of the right to clean a given area in the holy places derives from the fact that the church or denomination which cleans a particular spot becomes the *de facto* owner of that spot. Ownership of a particular spot has no tangible value but it does boost a sect's prestige. Since most churches in the Holy Land were constructed, their ownership has changed hands from one denomination to another depending on wishes of the particular country in power and the relations and agreements between the contesting churches themselves.

Status Quo

For the past 100 or more years, the administration and ownership of most of the holy places has been carefully worked out in consecutive Turkish, British and Jordanian-sponsored agreements referred to as the *status quo*. The agreements call upon all churches to honour the division which existed at that time. The first of the recent agreements was signed during the rule of the British in 1919. Gladstone, the deputy military governor of Bethlehem, supervised the agreement, which details with minute precision who has the right to what. The complicated agreement details answers to almost every hypothetical dispute that could arise concerning who has the right to clean, paint or sweep, with the caveat that holy places must remain accessible to all denominations. But disputes persisted, primarily because the *status quo* did not provide for redress in the event of violations of the agreement. Hence, the churches with the largest land-holdings in Palestine made new agreements whenever problems arose. A third party (i.e., Armenian, Greek Orthodox or Latin) was generally called upon to witness the agreement. The government in power was also a signatory to the post-Gladstone agreements. This procedure is still followed today.

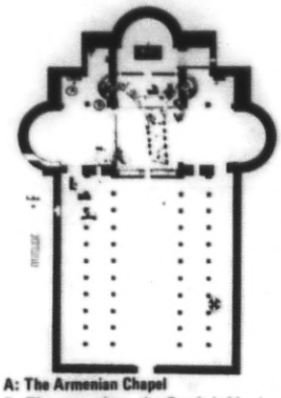
Unfortunately, however, and despite all the agreements, power-hungry clergymen involve themselves in physical brawls over the rights to various parts of the holy places.

Father Albert Rock, the representative of the Latin Custodian of the Holy Places, spoke to *Al Fajr* about the problems that occurred this Christmas at the Nativity Church. He had anticipated problems, but when he asked some of his colleagues if he could urge the Israeli military governor to cancel the traditional annual cleaning, they refused. According to the clergy, the military governor has no right to intervene in the ritual cleaning except if there is a fight. This arrangement means that if any two sides cannot agree, one starts cleaning the disputed area. If the other party does not protest, then the cleaner gains *de facto* "rights" over that area. But if the other side opposes, a fight takes place, and the military authorities interfere and are asked to mediate. The pecking order changes according to the preferences of the ruling government for one denomination over another.

Over the last several hundred years, the ruling governments have awarded large sections or even whole churches to one denomination or another. Church history reveals, for example, that the Church of the Nativity has been variously "owned" by the Latins, Greek Orthodox and Armenians at different times. An Armenian inscription on one of the doors to the grotto area in the Church of the Nativity dates to the 13th century when the Armenians controlled access to the church. Greeks, on the other hand, have presided over the Church of the Nativity and other holy places for the longest amount of time, primarily because they were built during the Roman and Byzantine eras. As one Latin priest, Father Paul Misterangile, put it: "Usually the church which pays the most to the ruling government can dictate what it owns."

Other factors, like the numerical weakness of a certain local community, give other denominations the opportunity to expand their holdings. Armenians charge that during the 19th century massacres, many of their rights were lost in the Holy Land as churches and the ruling Turks exploited their community's tragedy.

Another recent example of political advantage can be seen in the Israeli authorities' favouritism toward the Ethiopian Coptic Church. During the Easter celebration in 1970, the Israelis gave the Ethiopians the Sultan's Convent, adjacent to the Holy Sepulchre, which had previously belonged to the Egyptian Copts. At the time, the Israelis were on good terms with Haile Selasse's Ethiopian government and at war with Egypt.



A: The Armenian Chapel
B: The area where the Greek ladder is supposed to be stationed during cleaning.

The 1984 Controversy

The contested area is the roof on top of the tiny Armenian chapel. According to the Gladstone pact, the Greek church can place a ladder in one spot and this ladder is not to be moved. The Greeks interpret this as giving them the right to climb on the beams and clean them. The Armenians vehemently refuse and claim that Gladstone's provison that the ladder not be moved means the Greeks are only allowed to clean as far as they can reach by hand from the top of the ladder. The Armenians further insist that more recent agreements – the latest in 1976 – stipulate that the Greek priest who cleans must use a hand broom and can clean only as far as the hand broom can reach. The Greeks are adamant that no agreement was signed in 1976 and challenge the Armenians to produce a copy.

Community Reaction

The latest clerics' cleaning-brawl has been condemned by the local Christian community and by the various spiritual leaders. Local Christians reacted to the news of the fight in Christianity's most holy site with adjectives like "shameful," "a disgrace" and "unacceptable." Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij strongly condemned the fight to *The London Times* and blamed the priests, whom he said have private motives for the attack. Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theodorus I, obviously upset by Freij's statement, called on the phone to express his displeasure.

Nasri Kanawati, head of the Orthodox Charitable Association in Bethlehem, also condemned the fight. He told *Al Fajr* that he hopes that within a few months the problem will be solved through the office of the Bethlehem military governor. When Father Timothy was told of Kanawati's response, he replied angrily to *Al Fajr*, "This is a matter that concerns the spiritual leadership only."

Considering the mistrust and lack of communication between laity and clergy in the Greek Orthodox Church, Father Timothy's response came as no surprise. Nevertheless, members of the Bethlehem community, including the mayor, are deeply concerned about the Christmas events and are embarrassed by the publicity that has surrounded the fight. As one Bethlehem resident put it, "We are ashamed that we Christians fight among ourselves and then call in an Israeli to solve our differences."

BOTTOM: The tiny Armenian chapel on the northern sector of the Nativity Church. INSET: The controversial beams; who will clean them next Christmas? BA/photo